FROM ANCIENT ROME TO COLONIAL MEXICO

Religious Globalization in the Context of Empire

Edited by

DAVID CHARLES WRIGHT-CARR

FRANCISCO MARCO SIMÓN

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UNIVERSITY PRESS OF COLORADO
Denver

© 2023 by University Press of Colorado

Published by University Press of Colorado
1624 Market Street, Suite 226
PMB 39883
Denver, Colorado 80202

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Printed in the United States of America

The University Press of Colorado is a proud member of the Association of University Presses.

The University Press of Colorado is a cooperative publishing enterprise supported, in part, by Adams State University, Colorado State University, Fort Lewis College, Metropolitan State University of Denver, University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Colorado, University of Denver, University of Northern Colorado, University of Wyoming, Utah State University, and Western Colorado University.

∞ This paper meets the requirements of the ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

ISBN: 978-1-64642-315-6 (hardcover)
ISBN: 978-1-64642-316-3 (ebook)
https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Wright, David, 1956– editor. | Marco Simón, Francisco, editor.
Title: From ancient Rome to colonial Mexico : religious globalization in the context of empire / edited by David Charles Wright-Carr and Francisco Marco Simón.
Description: Louisville : University Press of Colorado, [2022] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022058923 (print) | LCCN 2022058924 (ebook) | ISBN 9781646423156 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781646423163 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Globalization—Religious aspects. | Globalization—Social aspects—Rome. | Globalization—Social aspects—New Spain. | Imperialism—Religious aspects. | Acculturation—Religious aspects. | Rome—History—Religious life and customs. | New Spain—History—Religious life and customs.
Classification: LCC BL65.G55 F76 2022 (print) | LCC BL65.G55 (ebook) | DDC 201/.727—dc23/eng20230126
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022058923
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022058924

This book was supported, in part, by Spain's Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

Front-cover illustrations: © The Trustees of the British Museum, museum number 1929,0419.1, reprinted with permission of the British Museum, London (*left*); modified image from "Monolith of the Stone of the Sun, also named Aztec calendar stone." Photograph by El Comandante; public-domain image from Wikimedia Commons (*right*).

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Following each reference to a classical source, numbers separated by periods indicate hierarchical divisions, generally books, chapters, and, in some cases, subdivisions such as paragraphs or verses. For example, "August. *De civ. D.* 8.1" refers to Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, book 8, chapter 1. These references are generic: published editions are generally not listed at the end of each chapter, following standard practice among classical scholars.[1]

A similar convention is used in many references to colonial sources from the Americas, adding in brackets the numbers of books, chapters, and subdivisions after references to published editions. For example, "Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 1, f. 13r [1.1]" refers to volume 1, folio 13 recto of the facsimile edition of Bernardino de Sahagún's *Florentine Codex*, published in 1979, with the additional information that the information referenced is found in book 1, chapter 1. Published editions of these New World sources are included in the reference lists of the chapters in which they appear, following standard practice among Mesoamericanist scholars.

Ach. R. Ins.: Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions
DBi: Darius, Behistan, column I
XPh: Xerxes, Persepolis, inscription H

Arn.: Arnobius
Adv. nat.: *Adversus nationes*

Athenagoras
Leg.: *Legatio pro Christianis*

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c000a

August.: Augustine of Hippo
De civ. D.: *De civitate Dei*
Ep.: *Epistulae*

Caes.: Julius Caesar
BGall.: *Bellum Gallicum*

Cass. Dio: Cassius Dio

Cic.: Cicero (Marcus Tullius)
Rep.: *De republica*
Rosc. Am.: *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino*

CIL: *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (1863–)

Clem. Al.: Clemens Alexandrinus
Protr.: *Protrepticus*

Cod. Theod.: *Codex Theodosianus*

Cyprian
De idol. vanit.: *De idolorum vanitate*

De reb. bel.: *De rebus bellicis*

Diod. Sic.: Diodorus Siculus

Dion. Hal.: Dionysius of Halicarnassus

Enn.: Ennius
Ann.: *Annales*

Epiph.: Epiphanius
Adv. haeres: *Adversus haereses* (*Panarion*)

Euseb.: Eusebius
Hist. eccl.: *Historia ecclesiastica*
Vit. Const.: *Vita Constantini*

Fest.: Sextus Pompeius Festus

FGrH: F. Jacoby, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (1923–)

Firm. Mat.: Firmicus Maternus
Err. prof. rel.: *De errore profanarum religionum*

Flor.: Lucius Annaeus Florus

Hdt.: Herodotus

Hes.: Hesiod
Theog.: *Theogonia*

Hom.: Homer
Od.: *Odyssey*

Hor.: Horace
Epist.: *Epistulae*

Joseph.: Josephus
Ap.: *Contra Apionem*

Julian.: Julianus imperator
Or.: *Orationes*

Justin.: Justin Martyr
Apol.: *Apologia*

Lactant.: Lactantius
Div. inst.: *Divinae institutiones*

Livy: Titus Livius, *Ab urbe condita libri*

Luc.: Lucan
Phars.: *Pharsalia*

M. Ant.: Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla)

Macrob.: Macrobius
Sat.: *Saturnalia*

Malalas: Iohannes Malalas,
Chronographia

Min. Fel.: Minucius Felix
Oct.: *Octavius*

Origen: Origen of Alexandria
C. Cels.: *Contra Celsum*

Ov.: Ovid
Fast.: *Fasti*

Pind.: Pindar
Pae.: *Paeanes*

Plin.: Pliny the Elder
NH: *Naturalis historia*

Plut.: Plutarch
Cic.: *Cicero*
De superst.: *De superstitione*
Num.: *Numa*
Rom.: *Romulus*
Them.: *Themistocles*

Polyb.: Polybius

Porph.: Porphyry
Abst.: *De abstinentia*

Prop.: Propertius

Prudent.: Prudentius
Perist.: *Peristephanon*

RIC: *The Roman Imperial Coinage*[2]

Rut. Namat.: Rutilius Namatianus,
De reditu

Sall.: Sallust
Cat.: *Bellium Catilinae* or
De Catilinae coniuratione

Sen.: Seneca (the Younger)
Clem.: *De clementia*
Ep.: *Epistulae*

SHA: Scriptores Historiae Augustae
Aurel.: *Aurelian*
M. Ant.: *Marcus Aurelius*
Antoninus (Caracalla)

Suet.: Suetonius
Aug.: *Divus Augustus*
Claud.: *Divus Claudius*

Tac.: Tacitus
Germ.: *Germania*

Tert.: Tertullian
Apol.: *Apologeticus*
De idol.: *De idolatria*
Re res. carnis: *Re resurrectione carnis*

Theod. Cyr.: Theodoret of Cyrus
HE: *Historia ecclesiastica*

Thuc.: Thucydides
His. Pel.: *History of the Peloponnesian War*

Val. Max.: Valerius Maximus

Varro
Ling.: *De lingua Latina*
Rust.: *De re rustica*

Verg.: Virgil
Aen.: *Aeneid*

Vitr.: Vitruvius
De arch.: *De architectura*

Zonar.: Zonaras

Zos.: Zosimus

NOTES

1. Where applicable, abbreviations follow the fourth edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (retrieved from https://oxfordre.com/classics/page/ocdabbreviations/).

2. Sutherland, C. H. V., Mattingly, H., Sydenham, E. A., Webb, P. H., Bruun, P. M., & Kent, J. P. C. (1923–1994). *The Roman imperial coinage* (Vols. 1–10). Spink.

FROM ANCIENT ROME TO COLONIAL MEXICO

Introduction

Francisco Marco Simón
and
David Charles Wright-Carr

The core of the research presented here explores the role of religion as a medium of social communication in two imperial contexts compared by way of analogy. On one hand, we consider the Roman Empire, in regards to which, in our opinion, we can speak of religious globalization. On the other hand is the Spanish colony in Mesoamerica, which emerged from a process of incipient intercontinental globalization that began in 1492 with the arrival of Columbus in the New World and culminated in Magellan and Elcano's circumnavigation in 1522. The comparison of the processes of religious globalization in these two historical settings, including the local responses that they provoked, is understood as a methodological foundation for arriving at a deeper understanding of each specific case, especially considering the importance of classical antiquity as a reference in interreligious contact in colonial Mesoamerica. This volume contains the final results of a collective research project, Religious Acculturation in the Old World and Colonial America: A Comparative Analysis of the Rhetoric of Alterity and the Construction of the Other, carried out between 2015 and 2018 with the participation of an international team of historians of religion and specialists in the fields of archaeology and anthropology. Preliminary results of this project have been presented in several congresses and have been published in academic journals.[1]

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c000b

EMPIRE, GLOBALIZATION, AND THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

The "discovery" of America by Europe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries meant, as never before, the irruption of an absolute otherness in European consciousness. And yet, American reality has traditionally been less appreciated than that of Africa or Southeast Asia, for example, in the human sciences' conceptual models and narrative strategies, as well as in the discussion of its epistemological foundations (Klor de Alva, 1988). On the other hand, from the perspective of classical studies, there has been almost no comparison of the diverse aspects of religious contact that characterized the ancient Mediterranean ecumene and those that affected the Spanish colonies in America, aside from a few notable exceptions (Gruzinski & Rouveret, 1976; Webster, 1997, 2001). Our research project has attempted to fill this gap and to achieve a deeper comprehension of the respective historical realities within the imperial framework of "world history" by studying colonialism in the "long" Roman Empire and in Spanish Mesoamerica through the filter of religious practice. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the West was forced to rethink its own logic due to the "discovery" of America and the invention of the printing press, there was also a rediscovery of classical antiquity.

There are historical movements and events that may be considered as global phenomena, owing to their broad scope. Examples include the spread of Buddhism, the Mongol expansion under Genghis Khan, the Norse colonization of the North Atlantic rim, and the Austronesian colonization of the western Pacific islands. Indeed, ten centuries ago Norsemen established a settlement in what is now Newfoundland, Canada (Ingstad & Ingstad, 2000), while at approximately the same time, Austronesian seafarers appear to have interacted with native peoples on the Pacific coast of South America, introducing Polynesian domestic fowl and other elements of their culture, possibly including boat-manufacturing technology (Storey et al., 2007; Storey & Matisoo-Smith, 2014). These commercial or cultural networks, however, are insufficient to support the notion of an "early globalization" in the full sense of the phrase, because they lack the key element that made globalization possible five centuries later: the emergence of a political, commercial, and cultural network spanning two vast expanses of the world ocean, uniting the Mediterranean region with America and eastern Asia (Wolf, 1997).

From that time on, an early globalization was underway, including the establishment of a complex trade system among all continents (Hausberger, 2018). This process, carried out by the Iberian powers, was completed in the brief period of three decades, from the arrival of Columbus to America in

1492 to the global circumnavigation begun by Magellan and completed by Elcano in 1522 (Yun-Casalilla, 2019). Gruzinski (2004, 2018) has pointed out that globalization had its roots in the sixteenth century and that the reality of living with people arriving from different continents came from Iberian culture, from the Spaniards and Portuguese that created cities with people from Europe, America, Africa, and Asia. As Jean Fernel wrote around 1530, "Our age today is doing things of which antiquity did not dream . . . a new globe has been given to us by the navigators of our time" (K. Jennings, 2011, p. 212).

One aspect of globalization is that the world is seen as a single interconnected territory where, in addition to the human migrations, emphasis is placed on cultural transmission and on the exchange and appropriation of material and cultural goods that intersect on a planetary scale, with colonial contacts as a privileged field of analysis (Gosden, 2004; Pagden, 1993). MacCormack (2007), referring to the Andean region, explains that

> the emergence of the land of Peru, understood both geographically and conceptually, reveals the classical and Roman themes that pervade our texts to have been more than instruments of description and analysis. Rather, they also became constituents of collective consciousness and identity. (p. xv)

The Spanish colonists were aware that the Roman Empire had united the diverse peoples of the Iberian Peninsula through processes of "Romanization," so that the model of Rome not only permitted the recognition of the Inca Empire as an imperial state, but at the same time the Roman Empire was seen as a model and precedent of the Spanish Empire itself, as MacCormack (2007, p. xviii) pointed out. Similar approximations were undertaken in Lupher's (2006) work *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America* and in Pohl and Lyons's (2016) introduction to the recent collective volume, *Altera Roma: Art and Empire from Mérida to Mexico*.

In the book we are presenting here, the point of departure is also the concept of *empire*, widely used in the description of political, social, or economic entities from antiquity to the present (Alcock et al., 2001; Arnason & Raaflaub, 2011; Eisenstadt, 1993; Finer, 1997; Motyl, 2001), together with another concept that we believe equally important, that of *globalization* (Conrad, 2017; Gills & Thompson, 2006; Hausberger, 2018; Sachsenmaier, 2011), specifically religious globalization.

Recently four models of interaction in the sphere of polytheistic religious systems have been distinguished (Burkert, 2000, p. 2). The first is the translation, or adaptation, between divine names as a result of cultural proximity (Bettini, 2014; Chiai, Häussler, & Kunst, 2012; Colin, Huck, & Vanséveren,

2015). The second is the transfer of images from one system to another—which can give rise to some strange and creative misunderstandings (White, 2006). The third is the personal mobility of cult actors in the Old World, from the Isiac priests to magicians or ritual specialists, or Judeo-Christian apostles like Paul. The final model is that of collective migrations, with their inherent processes of colonization, such as the colonization of the Mediterranean world by the Phoenicians and Greeks, or the population movements within the Assyrian, Persian, and Roman empires. All of these models may also be observed in Mesoamerica at the time of Spanish conquest and colonization.

A similarity between the Roman Empire and that of the Aztecs in Mesoamerica is that they were initially city-states that developed into territorial states, in the first case through the conquest of Italy and the victory over Carthage and the Greco-Hellenistic kingdoms, and in the second case from the Triple Alliance created in 1428 between Mexico Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan, although in Mesoamerica there was nothing comparable to the collective concession of citizenship that we know in the Roman world (Scheidel, 2016, pp. 26–27; M. Smith, 2000). And of course there is a notable difference between the processes of interreligious contact that take place in the ancient world, and more specifically in the Roman Empire, and those that take place in Mesoamerica at the time of the conquest and colonization by the Spanish. While in the first case the polytheistic systems characterized both the religion of the colonial power and those of the dominated countries (until Christianity managed to become the exclusive religion of the state, which did not happen until the end of the fourth century with the Edict of Thessalonica promulgated by Theodosius), the Spanish monarchy that carried out the conquest of Mesoamerica was characterized by a religious monotheism that imbued the colonizing enterprise with an evangelizing mission that was totally absent from the Roman interventions in the Mediterranean. The Romans never tried to export their religious system to the subjugated peoples (Ando, 2007), let alone extend their religion by force of arms, given the inclusive nature of the polytheistic systems (Bettini, 2014). This does not imply that the landscape of the various areas in which religious Romanization took place was not changed by the architectural monumentalization of the Capitolia (temples of the triad formed by Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva) and the temples of the imperial cult, a truly cohesive element in very diverse spaces and social realities (Ando, 2000; Pollini, 2012).

The perspective of globalization and the transformations of ethnic identity within the Mediterranean world system—defined first by the cultural koiné of the Hellenistic world, then by the Roman Empire, responds to an attempt to describe processes of increasing interconnectivity between diverse regions

and localities.[2] It would be a mistake, however, to think that these processes necessarily lead to a cultural unity in which the dominant culture eventually replaces local cultures. On the contrary, there is a paradox inherent to globalization, in the sense that the processes that accentuate cultural homogenization through the incorporation of things and ideas pertaining to the "global culture" ultimately include the transformation of these things and ideas, and their assimilation into subordinate cultures, to the point where they end up affirming local identity. Thus globalization is a dual process, implying both the universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal (van Alten, 2017, p. 87).[3] In any case, religion plays an essential role as a medium of cultural dialogue (Geertz, 1993, pp. 87–125; Rives, 2000; Rüpke, 2011) and in redefining the place of the individual in a changing world (Stek, 2009).

Together with the parameters of empire and globalization, and intimately bound up with them, this book approaches the concept of religion from a postcolonial perspective, as a colonial device (Botta & Ferrara, 2016) that in the globalized framework inherent to the Age of Discovery inspired different processes of "spiritual conquest" through which the colonists attempted to transform native mentality (Gruzinski, 2004). Clearly, throughout these processes language is a key element for establishing the conditions in which the dominant and subordinate groups negotiated meanings, conventions, or stereotypes regarding religion. It is also important to deal with the matter of the circulation of knowledge, because the European literary tradition was adapted to the very different cultural realities of America (Botta & Ferrara, 2016, pp. 531–532).

It is not accidental that the period of the colonization of Mesoamerica was also that of the "invention" of religion as a globalized concept (Borgeaud, 2004; Nongbri, 2013; Stroumsa, 2010). Jonathan Smith (2014) points out that the concept of *religion*, as an anthropological rather than a theological category, arose as a result of the encounter between Columbus and the American Indians. A similar comparison was made by O'Gorman (1958/1984), when he distinguished between finding that which was sought and the invention, a posteriori, of an unexpected novelty.[4] The importance of religion in cultural encounters (Alvar, 1991; Bernand and Gruzinski, 1993; Bitterly, 1989; Cruz Andreotti, 2019; Cushner, 2006; Davidann and Gilbert, 2013; Flütcher, 2017; Graulich, 1994; Levitin, 2018) seems obvious, as "of all the objective elements, which define civilization, the most important usually is religion . . . To a very large degree, the major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with the world's great religions" (Huntington, 1996, p. 42).[5] Religion is not merely confined to the constitution of culture and civilization. In fact, it is often the reason for the encounters between cultures and civilizations

(Sacco, 2019, p. 70). In those encounters the cross went hand in hand with the sword, as explained by Jesuit priest José de Acosta in the late sixteenth century (De Acosta, as cited in Sacco, 2019, pp. 81–82):

> *Dos cosas que parecían entre sí tan dispares, como son la difusión del Evangelio de la paz y la extensión de la espada de la guerra, no sé porque nuestra época ha hallado no solo la manera de juntarlas, sino aun de hacerlas depender necesario y legalmente una de otra. Es verdad que la condición de los bárbaros que habitan este Nuevo Mundo por lo común es tal que a no ser que se les obligue como a bestias, apenas habría esperanza o nunca jamás llegarán a humanizarse y a alcanzar la libertad de los hijos de Díos [*sic*]. Mas, por otra parte, se proclama que la fe misma es un don de Díos y no es obra de los hombres, y que por su misma razón de ser es tan libre que totalmente logra destruirla quien intenta imponerla a la fuerza.*
>
> [Two things that seemed so different from each other, such as the spreading of the Gospel of peace and the extension of the sword of war, I don't know why our era has found not only a way to bring them together, but even to make them necessarily and legally dependent on each other. It is true that the condition of the barbarians who inhabit this New World is usually such that unless they are forced like beasts, there would hardly be any hope or they would never be humanized nor attain freedom as children of God. But, on the other hand, it is proclaimed that faith itself is a gift of God and is not the work of men, and that by its very reason for existence it is so free that it is totally destroyed by those who try to impose it by force.][6]

As Huntington (1996, p. 50) points out, the West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas, values, or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence.

The contributions to this book propose to use the comparative method as a point of departure, rather than a point of arrival (Scheid & Svenbro, 1997), for conceptualizing historical differences, since the objective of historical comparison is to attain a deeper understanding of cultural specificities.[7] We use the comparative method to gain a better knowledge of a concrete historical situation. To quote T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*,

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.
> (Eliot, n.d.)

Of course comparative history takes many forms, and comparative historians by and large have different goals and apply different techniques, tending to focus on

> "analytical comparisons" between equivalent units (say, the Roman and Aztec Empires) in order to identify factors that help to explain common or contrasting patterns or occurrences . . . comparative history uses case-based comparisons to investigate historical variation and to devise causal explanations of particular overcomes. (Scheidel, 2016, pp. 21–22)

We try to carry out a comparison that is at once globalizing and differentiating (Tilly, 1984). As Momigliano (1966) points out, "comparative anthropology is more likely to indicate alternative possibilities of interpretation for the evidence we have than to supplement the evidence we have not" (p. 581). Or, in Smith's (1990) words,

> comparison does not necessarily tell us how things 'are' . . . like models and metaphors, comparison tells us how things might be conceived, how they might be 'redescribed'. . . . Comparison provides the means by which *we* 're-vision' phenomena as *our* data in order to solve our theoretical problems. (p. 52)

Smith (1990, p. 99) has pointed out that comparison, understood in a strict sense, "always take place in relationship to a 'third term'—a taxon or pattern—which prevents the implication (or subsequent proposition) of borrowing or influence," especially if one considers the potential of ethnographic *comparandum* to rectify historical themes and the acritical perpetuation of theological bias as well as the fallacy of emic interpretation. We deceive ourselves when we imagine ourselves to be working on historical or textual materials purely in indigenous terms, as if it were possible to adopt the viewpoints of ancient cultures. Our translations and interpretations remove indigenous perspectives from their world and insert them into a modern context in which only through comparison can they acquire discursive significance (Frankfurter, 2012, pp. 84, 88).

But our intention in this book is not to carry out a systematic or "hard" comparison between realities or processes in Mesoamerica and the ancient world, especially the Roman Empire, around a series of previously established "third terms." Rather, we are interested in carrying out a "weak comparison" (Lincoln, 2018) from the outset, one which meets the four requirements set out by Lincoln to limit the dangers of an excessively ambitious aim: a comparison that (1) affects a small number of cases, (2) is interested in both similarities and differences, (3) recognizes the similar value of the data, and (4) takes into

account the contexts in a systematic way. Our comparison is "weak" precisely because of the relative novelty of the topic, which, with the exception of the book edited by Pohl and Lyons (2016), had not been addressed to date.[8] We therefore advocate, to a certain extent, a constructive comparison of "comparing the incomparable," of building comparable objects. As Detienne (2001, p. 9) points out, "how can we decide in advance what is comparable if not through an implicit value judgment that already seems to rule out the possibility of building what may be 'comparable'?"

CONTRIBUTIONS

The first chapter, by Greg Woolf, compares modes of cultural and religious interaction in different historical contexts. He employs, as a third category in the historical comparison, the concept of *middle ground*, developed by White (1991) in his study of the interactions between Europeans and Indians in the Great Lakes region, from the mid-seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Gosden (2004) uses the concept of middle ground in his tripartite taxonomy of colonialisms, together with what he calls *terra nullius*, in which colonizers possess an overwhelming force (the conquest of Mesoamerica is given as an example of this category), and *colonialism within a shared cultural milieu*, where there is little cultural distinction between colonizing and colonized peoples. For Gosden, the middle ground is an intermediate category, where there is an uneven balance of power, albeit without the presence of an overwhelming force. This approach, despite White's reservations, can be useful for the analysis of cultural encounters in colonial contexts, because it transcends the dichotomy of Indians and Europeans while focusing on modes of negotiation and communication as well as the mutual misunderstandings that arose from interactions in colonial contexts and resulted in new meanings. Woolf shows that the kinds of middle grounds that emerged in the Roman expansion and in the colonization of Mesoamerica, while different from the situation in the Great Lakes, are comparable. The Romans lacked the technological advantages of the Spaniards in Mesoamerica, and in contrast to the radically different culture encountered by Iberian colonists, they operated within a more or less familiar ecumene; while the Roman conquests were violent, they did not provoke the radical transformations that were imposed upon the natives of Mesoamerica by the Spanish colonists. Woolf emphasizes the importance of ritual mediation in the case of Rome, owing to a long tradition of accommodations between distinct polytheistic systems; religious authority was exercised through locally controlled ritual, while missionary activity was

practically nonexistent. In the case of New Spain, there were also intermediate spaces in which productive misunderstandings, and the intentional manipulation of symbols, emerged through ritual mediation. For these reasons Woolf questions the application of Gosden's category of *terra nullius* in America.

György Németh's contribution explores the transition or conversion from paganism to Christianity, a slow process in which Christians continued to make use of local iconography, though some of these symbols might not be compatible with the new religion. Many Christian amulets contain vestiges of pagan magic, and this also occurs with curse tablets, even though their manufacture and use implied a conflict with Christian values.[9] The sanctuary of Anna Perenna in Rome is particularly relevant to this topic: there, six lead containers bear representations of anthropo-zoomorphic demons associated with alphabetic inscriptions in Greek, including references to Jesus Christ. Curse tablets, found in places like Bath, show that pagans and Christians shared the same places of worship. The biography of Saint Hilarion, composed by Saint Hieronymus in the late fourth century, tells of Hilarion's role in countering a curse that had partially paralyzed a charioteer and of his use of magic to influence the outcome of chariot races in Gaza, revealing the early Christians' belief in the power of magicians in spite of the prohibition by the Council of Laodicea against the practice of magic by clerics. The persistence of traditional magic in Hungary until recent times is documented, including folk advocations of Mother Earth or Babba Mária (Beautiful Mary) to play the role of the pagan goddess Boldogasszony. This process shows a striking resemblance to what happened in New Spain, where the ancient Nahua goddess Tonantzin was identified with the Virgin Mary.

The next two chapters are transitional in the thematic sequence of this book, encompassing both of the historical horizons that are compared here, the Roman Empire and the Spanish colonial empire in Mesoamerica, dealing with specific aspects of religious ritual and ideology. In the first of these, Francisco Marco Simón approaches the theme of human sacrifice as a sign of extreme religious otherness, in both classical antiquity and in the colonization of New Spain (in this sense, this topic constitutes the "third term" background to the construction of religious alterity in both the ancient and modern worlds). This topic has received renewed attention in the last few years, with interpretations that do not always coincide, and is the most characteristic feature of the religion of the "other" in these historical contexts. Three different horizons and representations are contemplated. The first is that of classical Greco-Latin authors, who made this theme the paradigm of barbarism. The second is that of early Christian authors, for whom it epitomized traditional religions, encompassed

by the denigrating term *paganism*. The third is that of the missionaries of New Spain, with their goal of converting the natives of Mesoamerica to their brand of Christianity. The ancient authors emphasized the otherness (*xénos*) and illegitimacy (*ánomos*) of this extraordinary ritual, remitting it to a remote past that had been transcended and assigning its practice to very different peoples: the Tauri from Pontus, the Egyptians (through the figure of Busiris), the Celts, the Carthaginians, and the Scythians. Documental evidence, however, testifies to the reality of this ritual in exceptional circumstances in the Roman Empire, including references to the burials of Gauls and Greeks in the Forum Boarium of Rome. Recent archaeological discoveries also suggest that human sacrifice was practiced occasionally in the Roman Empire, for example in Verulanium, Britannia. From the paleo-Christian perspective, human sacrifice was no longer seen as a cultural distinction, or an example of moral degradation, but rather as an essential feature permeating traditional religious systems. The same thing occurs in the Spanish colonists' view of native Mesoamerican religion, which highlights child sacrifice, cannibalism, or sexual degeneration as significant features. Archaeology confirms certain differences in the ritual praxis of the Old World and Mesoamerica: compared to its elusiveness in the archaeological record of the Greco-Latin domain, human sacrifice played a fundamental role in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. There are, however, certain common elements in the ancient, paleo-Christian, and Mesoamerican conceptions, for example the notion of self-sacrifice as a means to access a higher reality for the renewal of cosmic forces, the ritual of symbolic theophagy, and the treatment of the physical remains of Christian martyrs and of Mesoamerican sacrificial victims.

In the following chapter, Lorenzo Pérez Yarza analyses solar deities as essential elements of a different "third category" for understanding religious processes in imperial contexts. The Aztec god Huitzilopochtli, prominent in central Mexican myth and ritual, and the Roman solar deity, including the imperial manifestation of Sol Invictus, appear as key elements in imperial ideology in the times preceding the evangelization of Mesoamerica and the Christianization of the Roman Empire. Both deities have a special relation with the state, and both legitimized the power of the ruler. In the Spanish colony, a series of ancient symbolic assimilations, such as the representation of Christ-Helios in a mosaic in the Vatican, or references to Dies Solis or Dominus Dei, justify the use of solar imagery as a metaphor to express the divine horizon in Christianity and as an instrument of acculturation in New Spain, comprehensible to both the European missionaries and native neophytes.[10]

The next two chapters present opposing viewpoints of the intercultural dynamics in the Spanish colony in Mesoamerica. The first reveals how various European writers and illustrators represented the native warriors of America from a Christian perspective, while the second shows a central Mexican indigenous perspective, using ancestral visual language to depict the changing geopolitical, social, and cultural landscape. Both views reveal the strategies employed by the sixteenth-century authors in the negotiation of political power and identity in the diverse society that was emerging in the colonial milieu of New Spain as Indians and Spaniards looked at each other across an ethnic divide.

Paolo Taviani scrutinizes the image of the enemy warrior in the early European chronicles of the Spanish conquest. He notes a substantial change in the religious implications of imperial warfare in the fourth century CE, with the emperors Constantine and Theodosius, when military victory was interpreted as a manifestation of the will of God. The Christian Empire was seen as the instrument of annihilation of the false deities of defeated peoples. Humanity was divided into two classes: those who acted in the name of God and those who opposed him. These two classes corresponded to the Empire and its enemies, both external and internal: heretics, rebels, pagans, and barbarians. This theological conception of war dates to the Old Testament, adding the universal expansion of the Christian faith to Roman empire-building, battling the *milites Diaboli* with prayer and combat. With these premises, Taviani proposes to interpret the images of the warriors encountered by the Spanish colonists in America. In the earliest accounts, from Columbus to Cabeza de Vaca, the naivety of the Indians is emphasized. With official chronicler Fernández de Oviedo, a stereotype emerges linking indigenous Americans with the Devil by highlighting practices such as idolatry, cannibalism, and sexuality as well as a natural resistance to the Christian faith. Ultimately, most colonial sources, including Cortés, Díaz del Castillo, and Las Casas, rarely express the stereotype of the Indian warrior possessed by the Devil. This is not so much due to the stereotype falling out of fashion, according to Taviani, nor to the lack of a credible military threat from the Indians—they had repeatedly placed the Europeans in difficult, even deadly situations—but to the need to exploit the natives as a labor force. The symbolic solution was to depict diabolical influence in the context of idolatrous ceremonies, including cannibalism and free love. The image of the Indian that reached Europe was that of an extremely barbarous people, but one that could easily be dominated.

The *Huamantla Map* is the focus of the contribution by David Charles Wright-Carr, a study of how Spanish colonization and religious imposition

were seen and interpreted from a native perspective. This pictorial manuscript, which is painted on an exceptionally large rectangle of bark paper and complemented by alphabetic glosses, was produced during the late sixteenth century in an Otomi town in eastern Tlaxcala, Mexico. Within a cartographic structure, events from cosmogonic and historical narrative traditions are depicted, woven together by paths of footprints representing migrations, by trails of blood, and by depictions of people and events such as war and human sacrifice. Materials, content, and formal aspects are essentially within the indigenous tradition of graphic communication, on the blurry boundary between the Western categories of iconography and writing. At the same time, the depiction of Spanish colonists and the use of alphabetic signs in numerous glosses written in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, reveal a degree of familiarity with European culture and an acknowledgment of the realities of imperial globalization. This document was painted at a crucial period in the history of Huamantla, when the town was emerging as a regional capital and the founding of a Franciscan missionary establishment contributed to the town's newfound political status. The map was painted by the lords of Huamantla as a tool for the negotiation of power and as an act of cultural resistance, drawing on historical narrative and ethnic identity to claim a privileged role in the emerging multicultural and globalized social order. Wright-Carr's chapter provides balance within the structure of this collective volume, making it clear that native Mesoamericans possessed an ancient and sophisticated cultural tradition comparable to that of Europe in spite of its radical otherness, and showing that the concept of "conquest," used often in the historiography of New Spain, oversimplifies the complex sociocultural interactions of early colonial central Mexico.

The four chapters that follow coincide in the analysis of the construction and the representation of Mesoamerican otherness by Franciscan missionaries, with Friar Bernardino de Sahagún as a pivotal figure. Here we enter an area characteristic of the middle ground in these colonial encounters, a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994), distinct from *I* and *you*, where communication, dialogue, and negotiation take place between colonizers and the colonized. This is the semiotic space of cultural interaction, where diverse elements and hybrid narrative forms coexist and where a "rhetoric of negotiation of the sacred towards a shared narrative" (Zinni, 2014) unfolds through novel strategies. As the Spanish grammarian Antonio de Nebrija (1492) wrote in the prologue of his grammar of the Castilian language, "*siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio*" [language has always been the companion of empire] (f. a.iir). The struggle for political and cultural control in America was, in part, the struggle for linguistic

supremacy. Hence the importance of the work of the mendicant friars and the recognition by the Jesuit priest José de Acosta, and eventually by royal officials, that the use of indigenous languages was the only means to achieve something resembling an authentic evangelization (Pagden, 1993; Wright-Carr, 2007).

The first chapter in this thematic block is by Sergio Botta, who studies the construction by the Franciscans of comparative strategies that would allow the inclusion of elements of Mesoamerican religion in the Christian worldview, in a process that implied a third term in the sense suggested by Smith (1990, p. 51): the premise of the universality of the Christian idea of God for comparing and confronting these two different worlds. For this undertaking, the text by Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei*, was of crucial importance, making possible the comparison of the "polytheistic" gods of classical antiquity with the deities of the natives of New Spain.[11] In this comparative endeavor, Botta traces the development of a global theory of religion during early modern history, while noting the differences in the use made of the Augustinian arguments by two influential Franciscans, Bernardino de Sahagún and Juan de Torquemada. The first of these authors shows a balance between rhetorical and structural functions: he uses Augustine's authority to justify his missionary project, while explaining the errors of the Indians to a European audience; his reconstruction provides a useful representation of Mesoamerican religion, inventing a pantheon of twelve deities, similar to the Varronian model that was deconstructed by Augustine. Torquemada, on the other hand, constructs a global model of idolatry, in which Mesoamerican polytheism is seen as a New World manifestation of a stage in the religious development of peoples throughout the world, in which the worship of idols is a natural condition in the absence of the grace of God.

The second contribution on the Franciscan missionary enterprise in New Spain is by Guilhem Olivier, who examines Sahagún's views on Nahua astrology and divination. To this end, he compares Greco-Roman tradition with Mesoamerican divinatory practice. The pagan gods, expelled from the Old World by the advance of Christianity, took refuge in the Indies, where they continued to deceive its population, according to the Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas's (1967, pp. 428–429) suspicions in the sixteenth century. This is the explanatory basis of the similarities in the divinatory practices of pagan antiquity and Mesoamerica. The Catholic Church disapproved of soothsaying in general as an undesirable aspect of paganism, although its attitude toward such practices changed over the centuries, assuming an ambiguous position on practices like "natural astrology." When Friar Bernardino de Sahagún writes about Nahua knowledge of the stars, he relates this tradition to European

astrology. At the same time, he condemns the use of the *tōnalpōhualli*, the 260-day divinatory calendar, citing its pagan origins and the lack of a natural basis. Olivier explores the origins in the writings of Augustine and Isidore of Seville of Sahagún's arguments against native divination, and cites the possible influence of European models, such as the *repertorios de los tiempos* (almanacs), in his description of the *tōnalpōhualli*, as both systems include predictions made at birth regarding a child's destiny. An attempt is made to understand Sahagún's insistence on the description and condemnation of the native divinatory calendar, especially his emphasis on avoiding its continued use in the baptism of children. Finally, Olivier looks at an unusual episode in the cross-cultural dialogue between the Franciscan and his neophytes, the description of the ill-omened bug called the *pīnāhuiztli*, illustrating the ambiguity of Christian responses to Mesoamerican divinatory practices as well as the friars' doubts regarding the capacity of the Indians to become Christians.

In the third contribution focusing on the missionary doctrine of the Franciscan friars, María Celia Fontana Calvo examines the theme of the millennial kingdom in an iconographic program painted in the *portería* (vestibule) of the Franciscan Convent of Saint Gabriel in the municipality of San Pedro Cholula, Puebla. The mural paintings respond to the alternate function of the *portería* as a confessional for the sick and dying, to whom it offers an image of hope in their spiritual salvation. The author identifies and interprets the principal elements of the murals, which include a wooded landscape, a colonnade covered with vegetation, and a frieze running around the upper part of the walls combining elements from classical and biblical traditions with details derived from native Mesoamerican culture. Fontana Calvo interprets this iconographic program as an eschatological episode, referring to the expectation of the first resurrection after the opening of the fifth seal of the Apocalypse, reserved here for the indigenous converts who have witnessed the faith of Christ (Revelation 6.9). Thus, the mural proclaims the promise of a millennial kingdom for the deceased indigenous Christians, with the characteristics of peace announced in the messianic prophecy of Isaiah (11.6–9), including Jesse's tree, prominently placed as an allusion to the divine presence. Fontana dates the execution of this mural program to the final third of the sixteenth century, when the indigenous population was suffering from a catastrophic demographic collapse brought on by epidemics and the burden of colonial exploitation at the hands of the Spanish colonists. It is especially interesting that the converted natives are glorified in the Roman way through the elements of the *imago cliptea* sarcophagus, because, like the Romans, they are considered gentiles, but from the New World.

In the fourth and final chapter of this set, Martin Devecka uses Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* (1979) to illustrate how the Christian worldview of Spanish friars and priests was an obstacle to the antiquarian interest and aesthetic appreciation of the sculptural and pictorial creations of the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica. In the same period that witnessed the conquest and colonization of New Spain, European scholars developed an antiquarian interest in the artistic expressions of classical antiquity, but this tendency failed to take root in Mesoamerica, as native material culture was associated with pagan idolatry and was seen as "masks for the Devil." This study is centered on Sahagún's discussion of the *tezcatetl* (mirror stones) used in divinatory practices by the Aztecs, seen by the Christian missionaries as "embodied demons." Both the immediacy of the cultural clash brought about by the Spanish conquest and the tenuous status of the natives' conversion meant that a genuine antiquarian appreciation of such precious objects would have to wait until the eighteenth century.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research compiled in this book supports the comparison of key elements in two processes of religious globalization separated by more than a millennium: one in the Old World, in the setting of the Roman Empire, and the other in the New World, in Spain's colonies in America. The correspondences and divergences revealed through this comparison have provided material for a productive conversation among specialists in classical scholarship and Mesoamerican studies, a fruitful interdisciplinary discussion involving ideas from history, anthropology, archaeology, art history, and philology. Recurring themes include the role of religion in processes of imperial domination; its use as an instrument of resistance, reinforcing and transforming the collective identities of the conquered; the imposition, appropriation, incorporation, and adaptation of various elements of religious systems by hegemonic groups and subaltern peoples; the creative misunderstandings that can arise on the middle ground, where power, ideology, and identity are negotiated; the rejection by Christianity of ritual violence—human sacrifice—and the use of this rejection by Christians as a pretext for inflicting other kinds of violence against peoples thus classified as "barbarian," "pagan," or "diabolical."

A third process, not explicitly discussed here but impossible to ignore despite its apparent but illusory absence, is our present-day reality, in which hegemonic forces contend for dominance in the world arena while institutionalized religions and local ritual traditions play significant roles in day-to-day

social and cultural interaction, and in the negotiation of personal and collective identities. Each generation of historians performs a creative reinterpretation of the documental and archaeological record while its particular present shapes its vision of the past, determining a unique historiographic style, flavoring both content and form. Our twenty-first-century perspective—which in the case of this book might be considered global, considering the diverse backgrounds of the authors—provides a sympathetic vantage point for discussing and attempting to decipher past processes of social communication in multicultural contexts.

NOTES

1. This project was financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain (project code HAR2014–57067-P). Examples of previous results may be seen in the papers presented in the 21st World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (Erfurt, Germany, August 23–29, 2015), which were published—with additional contributions by members of this project—in Vol. 82, No. 2 of the journal *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* (2016), with the theme "Religion as a colonial concept in modern history (America, Asia)." Other papers by members of this project were presented at the 38th International Americanistic Congress (Puebla, Mexico, November 7–13, 2016), in a panel discussion, "America Seen by and Constructed by Foreigners," coordinated by María Celia Fontana Calvo and Jesús Nieto Sotelo. Further contributions were presented at the International Research Workshop, at the Spanish School of Archaeology and History in Rome, Italy, with the theme "The Cults of the Others: Interreligious Contacts in the Roman Empire and Colonial America" on September 8, 2016; these were published, again with additional articles by project members, in Vol. 53 of the journal *Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debreceniensis* (2017). For a description of this project, see Marco Simón (2017a). Many of the chapters included in this volume were presented in preliminary form at the conference Religions in Contact held at the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, June 14–15, 2018. The editing and illustration of this volume were supported by a grant from the University of Guanajuato (Convocatoria Institucional de Investigación Científica 2021, project 171/2021).

2. See Bang & Kołodziejczyk, 2012; Cancik, Schäfer, & Spickermann, 2006; Chiai, Häussler, & Kunst, 2012; Cruz Andreotti, 2019; de Blois, Funke, & Hahn, 2006; Gardner, 2013; Hesker, Schmidt-Höfner, & Witschel, 2009; Hingley, 2005; Hodos, 2019; J. Jennings, 2011; Lavan, Payne, & Weisweiler, 2016; and Pitts & Versluys, 2014. Regarding the importance of diasporas in imperial contexts for the emergence of religious systems, the role of language in the choice of cults, and the importance of major urban

centers as the site of religious encounter and innovation, see Woolf, 2017. On religious competition in the Greco-Roman world, see DesRosiers & Vuong, 2016.

3. The application of the concept of globalization to the Roman Empire has been criticized as being an anachronism, since Rome was not a truly global empire (Naerebout, 2006–2007), or as being a substitution of the concept of Romanization (Mattingly, 2004). The Roman Empire, however, facilitated the interconnection of widely diverse lands and peoples, and religion played a vital role in the process of defining the role that each region would have in the new order (Roudometof, 2016; Stek, 2009). As Derks (1995, p. 111) points out, "one of the most suitable fields of study for examining the integration of native societies in the wider context of the Roman state is their religion. Nowhere is the definition of a group or of an individual more clearly perceptible than in their rituals."

4. Regarding the basic modes of comparison—ethnographic, encyclopedic, morphological, evolutionary, and structuralist—see J. Smith, 2014, pp. 59–65.

5. The importance of religion is expressed in the most diverse contexts. Thus, the Castilians tried to prevent their Christian Arab subjects from bathing, not because they believed that dirt would make the Arabs more familiar, less "other," but because they knew that Muslim washing was a very significant part of their ritual devotion and therefore considered it an integral part of an alien and hostile religious system (Pagden, 1993, p. 186).

6. Translations of quotations are by the authors.

7. See Calame & Lincoln, 2012. On comparative methodology, see Bettini, 2014; Burger & Calame, 2006; Detienne, 2001; Lincoln, 2018 (especially "Theses on Comparison," pp. 25–33); and Stroumsa, 2018 and 2019. On "religious mutations," see Pirenne-Delforge & Scheid, 2013. On "cultural hybridity," see Burke, 2009.

8. The Spanish chroniclers themselves (both conquerors and missionaries) made at least two types of comparison for different purposes, as Valenzuela Matus (2016, pp. 236–237) has pointed out: that of the ancient Greeks and Romans compared to the native Mesoamericans, in an attempt to mitigate the impact of the latter's customs (for example Bartolomé de Las Casas and Gerónimo de Mendieta); and that of the ancient Greeks and Romans compared to the Spaniards, to help spread the idea of Spanish providentialism (José de Acosta and Francisco López de Gómara).

9. In contrast to the Christian rhetoric of a clear contrast between the monotheism of the *vera religio* and traditional polytheisms, literature itself and, above all, epigraphy and archaeological findings, document a common language of practices and symbols as well as "converging borders" between pagans and Christians. See Martínez Maza (2019) regarding Bourdieu's notion of "habitus."

10. On the use of solar imagery in the evangelization of Mesoamerican natives, exploiting the affinity between Christ and Helios, see also Olivier, in this volume.

11. Marco Simón (2017b) provides three approaches for the conceptualization of other peoples' gods, from Strabo to Bernardino de Sahagún: atheism, demonization, and interpretation.

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1

Ritual Mediation on the Middle Ground

Rome and New Spain Compared

Greg Woolf

ON MIDDLE GROUNDS

European adventurers and conquerors, scientists and missionaries, approached the Americas with a battery of preconceptions and received wisdoms (Elliot, 1970; Pagden, 1993). These included habits of ritual, items of dogma, notions of divinity, understandings of priesthood and church, and much else that seemed to them general truths but to us are transparently local understandings transplanted into alien soil. Some flourished, others never took root, a few produced strange and fascinating fruit. All of this is well known and well explored. Now there is a reverse flow, one in which concepts and inventions developed to understand early modern and more recent encounters are being transplanted back to assist in the study of antiquity. This chapter is concerned with one such, the notion of the *middle ground* and its application to religious activity in the ancient Mediterranean.

The notion of a middle ground has been employed quite widely in discussions of antiquity, especially by archaeologists and historians looking for ways to describe conditions in the archaic Mediterranean.[1] Part of the attraction is the capacity of the concept to describe "messy" and complicated patterns of interaction. Many of the same studies also employ entanglement theory or evoke hybridity and creolization or badge themselves as postcolonial. For those trained in the study of the ancient world, the middle ground evokes an alluring space in which many agencies

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c001

intersected. It offers an attractive alternative to narratives of conquest, assimilation, imperialism, or colonization that approach the experience of encounters more from one direction than another. The middle ground is usefully complex compared to "Greeks and others" or "Romans and natives." For ears sensitized to Francophone usage, there is perhaps also an echo of *sur le terrain*, "in the field," the counterpoint to high theory, a commitment to recognizing the intricate details of local realities and their materiality.

The origin of the term is Richard White's influential monograph of the same name, published in 1991. The middle ground described the situation in the Great Lakes Region in the period between 1650 and 1815, where different groups of native Americans and Europeans encountered each other across a broad swathe of territory known in French as the *pays d'en haut*, the "upper country." The distinctiveness of this period and this encounter, in White's view, was that local societies had been critically disrupted by the advance of European fur traders, settlers, and military expeditions but had not (yet) been brought under the control either of European empires or of the emerging colonial republics of North America. One of the book's many strengths is that it evaded simple dichotomies between Indians and Europeans. The world into which French Canadians and then others moved was already traumatized by violent raids carried out by the Iroquois on various Algonquian-speaking peoples. The world they came from was equally convulsed by wars between the English and French and by the emergence of creole elites in the Americas. The story ends with local populations facing the expansion of the new American republic, fresh from its successful War of Independence.

With hindsight this seems a transitional period, an intermission between first contact and the incorporation of territories and peoples into imperial regimes. At the time, it was simply messy. White's interest was in the kind of accommodations and negotiations, local understandings and misunderstandings, in the cross-cultural conventions involving many parties that emerged on the middle ground. Within a region divided by ancestry and language, technology and religion, connections were made and institutions of a sort emerged that lasted or evolved over nearly two hundred years, five or six human generations.

The book has been much discussed.[2] White himself has commented on his surprise at the way a fine-grained study of a quite particular historic space has been appropriated to form a general model of cultural interaction, one that might be applied to quite different parts of the world and even to antiquity (White, 2011, xi–xxiv).[3] Gallantly he goes on to say that the author of a book about the creative power of misunderstandings has no right to complain if

others have made something unexpected out of his ideas. All the same, he makes clear what he considers the elements necessary for the creation of a space that is similar to his middle ground:

> a rough balance of power, mutual need or a desire for what the other possesses, and an inability by either side to commandeer enough force to compel the other to change. Force and violence are hardly foreign to the process of creating and maintaining a middle ground, but the critical element is mediation. (White, 2006, p. 10)

White also insists on the spatial dimensions of the world within which mediation takes place and on the creation of new infrastructures in conditions where no one group dominated the other. I shall not discuss how far individual appropriations of his ideas by particular archaeologists and ancient historians satisfy White's criteria (nor whether they should have to). Naturally, we have not all done the same things with his ideas.

Chris Gosden makes one generalizing appropriation of the concept of the middle ground in his tripartite taxonomy of colonialisms: the other two types he labels "*terra nullius*" and "colonialism within a shared cultural milieu" (Gosden, 2004, pp. 24–40). *Terra nullius* denotes a situation where colonizers arrive with overwhelming force and do not recognize the prior arrangements or rights of indigenous inhabitants. This is the territory of atrocities, genocides, and mass expropriations. The conquest of New Spain is explicitly cited as an example of this mode of colonization. *Colonialism within a shared cultural milieu* describes political or military expansion when there is little culture gap. Greeks dominating Greeks is one example. The middle ground is an intermediate category, meetings of strangers when there are some power differentials but without either side having overwhelming force. Accommodation, the generation of new cultural differences, and a destabilizing of values on both sides characterize situations of this kind. Relations between Greeks or Romans and the nonurban populations on their peripheries provide one of his examples. Crucially Gosden stresses that his taxonomy serves heuristic purposes only, that real-life situations were more complex and not fixed or stable, and that these types are designed as tools for examining individual cases, not as adequate descriptions on their own of any particular situation:

> The last qualification I would make is that the typology should not be seen as a linear progression from one form to another: within one colonial formation all three types can exist simultaneously: there can be movement from one to another, or one form can be found alone. (Gosden, 2004, p. 25)

The notion of movement between forms of colonialism is an important one, especially if we stipulate that movement is not always in one direction. White's middle ground referred to a particular period, one that had a place in a larger narrative of the history of the First Nations over the last five centuries. If the description is to be generalized it should not be teleological. Middle grounds should not always represent halfway stages toward complete subordination, even if that has often been the experience of modernity. Gosden's insistence on the coexistence of different forms of colonialism is important too. Perhaps few encounters are ever quite as devastating as the term *terra nullius* suggests. Probably there is always some need for mediation.

ROMAN AND AMERICAN MIDDLE GROUNDS COMPARED

There are enormous contrasts between Roman experiences in their provinces and those of the Spaniards in Mesoamerica. Gunpowder and iron working, horses and oceangoing vessels, gave the Spaniards immense advantages over indigenous populations, quite apart from the disease flows that came with conquest (Gosden, 2004).[4] Yet despite this disparity in power, we can still find instances of accommodations similar to those described by White in *The Middle Ground*. Gosden presumably classified the conquest of New Spain under *terra nullius* because of the lack of respect paid to existing rights to land and power. This was certainly correct. Yet at the ragged fringes of Spanish power, spaces were opened up for productive misunderstandings.

Religious mediation provides many examples of this. White's (1991) account of encounters between Jesuit missionaries and local peoples shows that the former were prepared, when it suited them, to take advantage of local misunderstandings about Christian religion. For instance, they did not challenge the locals when they at first interpreted the Jesuits and Christ as *manitou* or spirit forces (pp. 25–28). There are obvious Mexican parallels such as the contentious process through which cult offered to Tonantzin at Tepeyac was in some sense replaced by cult offered to Our Lady of Guadalupe. *Misunderstanding* is perhaps the wrong term. It seems that at least some of the participants had a very clear understanding of what was going on and made instrumental use of what they understood as their interlocutors' misperceptions. These conform in general terms to White's notion of actors seeking out "cultural congruencies, either perceived or actual" (p. 52) and his dictum that "any congruence, no matter how tenuous, can be put to work and take on a life of its own if it is accepted by both sides" (pp. 52–53). There is no doubting the scale of the trauma experienced by American societies in the centuries of colonial domination, the

staggering death toll, the loss of indigenous culture, and the violence suffered by many individuals. Yet Gosden's injunction to acknowledge the complexity of these histories encourages us to notice that even against the background of these events, new hybrid forms did emerge that included traces of local imagery and ritual.

If even imperial Spain relied in part on mediation, then the same must be true of the early Roman Empire (Dench, 2018, p. 46). Roman armies had none of the technological advantages later enjoyed by Europeans over the populations of the Americas and suffered the same numerical disadvantages as the conquistadors. Mediterranean states had some slight economic and organizational superiority over the inhabitants of continental Europe and Africa. Yet Roman expansion occurred within an interconnected world that had been formed by millennia of technology flows and other exchanges. Rome and those who would ultimately become her subjects used the same metals, the same domesticated animals, and most of the same domesticated crops, and also had in common coinage and alphabetic writing systems. Centuries of warfare and alliance, mercenary service and commerce, meant that Mediterranean and European populations knew each other quite well. Whatever the rhetoric employed in documents like the *Res Gestae* of Augustus, or on triumphal monuments from the first century BCE and the first century CE, Rome was not conquering *terra incognita* but extending dominion over a largely familiar ecumene.[5]

That familiarity had some advantages when it came to mediation. In the second chapter of *The Middle Ground*, White considers a range of media through which the French and the Algonquian-speaking peoples created pragmatic mutual understandings. Some involved repurposing existing concepts such as the French notion of *le sauvage*. There were also evolving diplomatic rituals such as gift exchange and the smoking of peace pipes. There were attempts to mythologize relations, some drawing on Christian elements as well as folktales and local motifs. Intermarriage was a means of building alliances at the microsocial level. Conventions arose to regulate trade and to limit feud. White described how ad hoc institutions were set up to adjudicate in the case of conflicts, creating what he terms "bizarre cultural hybrids" (p. 79). Ceremonial was invented or modified to represent and solidify new relationships. Rituals, mythology, and ceremonial all played central parts in creating the middle ground in *le pays d'en haut*.

When Roman power was decisively extended beyond the Mediterranean littoral—mostly during the first century BCE, in fact—much less needed to be invented. I have discussed elsewhere how existing conventions of mythography and science provided Romans, Greeks, and indigenous peoples with the

means to create new relations of kinship, underpinned by new histories, in the Roman west (Woolf, 2011b).[6] Others have pointed out how elements of a shared aristocratic culture had emerged from the archaic period on. Rituals of guest-friendship and of formal wine drinking are already visible in the Homeric poems. The spread of sympotic imagery, drinking equipment, and wine itself in the archaic and classical periods has been richly documented (Dietler, 1989; Murray, 1990; Murray & Tecusan, 1995). It occurred wherever Greeks traded or settled, in Etruria, in the situla art of the Veneto, and in temperate Europe, with local variations but on a recognizably cosmopolitan theme.

This familiarity did not mean there was no need for mediation, nor that further misunderstanding was impossible. It simply meant that, as Rome reduced neighboring peoples to subject populations, there was less of an initial gulf to cross and media were available through which new situations could be negotiated. Those media of cross-cultural communications contributed—along with other factors such as a shared disease pool—to one final contrast between the Roman Empire and New Spain. Roman expansion was not a catastrophe. It did not entail a demographic collapse, mass expropriations of land, or the demolition of cosmological certainties. For casualties of conquest and those enslaved after it, Roman conquest was indeed brutal. Recent work by both archaeologists and historians has made it clear not only that episodes of genocide did take place, erasing communal identities and obliterating local knowledge, but also that Romans regarded such tactics as legitimate and necessary in some circumstances.[7] But Roman conquest did not bring about the cataclysmic end of a way of living, as the success of the conquistadors did in what they made into a New World.

RELIGIOUS MEDIATION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Ritual is an elastic term. Smoking a pipe together, taking part in a symposium, intermarrying, and naming one's children after one's guest-friends are all appropriately described as rituals.[8] Like routines, they are associated with social conventions, and their practice is entangled with particular objects and substances. What distinguishes these rituals from other routines is a shared understanding of their significance. Taking part in rituals of this kind effects changes in the relationship of the participants. Like a shared rite of passage—and most rites of passage are in some sense shared—these rituals built and modified relationships and identities. All this happened across the many middle grounds of the ancient Mediterranean world throughout the last millennium BCE and the first centuries CE.

For the remainder of this paper I will be concerned with a narrower set of rituals, those in which some of the participants were divine beings. My argument is that here too, mediation between Romans and others was made much easier by long-established modes of interaction, by conventions formed on pre-Roman middle grounds.

Once again there are some obvious differences with the situation in New Spain that need to be born in mind. Most obviously the ancient world knew nothing like the varieties of Christianity that were imported by early modern Europeans along with their guns, germs, and steel (Diamond, 1997). Historians of classical antiquity are now very wary of writing of "religion" at all (Nongbri, 2013).[9] Even those who continue to use the term immediately point out the absence of a centralized authority, exclusive membership, or dogma from the ancient world. The world of the polytheists was far from tranquil, but it knew neither schism nor heresy. Ritual acts accompanied almost every kind of collective activity—political, social, festal, and sporting—and were ubiquitous in family life and in daily routines of work and leisure. Yet the absence of a secular sphere meant religion was barely separated from other activities.

Religious authority in particular presents a contrast. Across the ancient world few religious leaders were not also members of the educated classes that ran and owned most ancient states. The most often-cited exceptions are Druids and the priesthoods of Judaea-Palestine and of Egypt (Goodman, 1987; Gordon, 1990a).[10] Even in these cases it is not clear how distinct these groups were from other elites in terms of interests, backgrounds, outlook, and behavior. The authority they exercised was over ritual action, which was mostly controlled very locally. The kinds of religious politics conducted in the early modern world between popes and kings, religious orders and colonists, bishops, military commanders, and civil governors are unimaginable in antiquity. Missionary activity was virtually unknown (Goodman, 1994).

The paradigm for religious mediation in the Roman case is usually taken to be ruler cult. There is now a broad consensus that this was not a unified religious program (and certainly not a religion) emanating from the center, but rather the cumulative project of dozens of accommodations through which the Roman Senate, people, Rome herself, and eventually the emperors and some of their relatives were incorporated into local systems of ritual.[11] That incorporation took many forms. It ranged from adding the names of emperors to hymns and oaths, carrying their statues in processions or placing them in temples, and inserting imperial anniversaries into religious calendars, to creating altars, temples, and priesthoods dedicated to individual emperors. Emperors found a place in ritual but never in myth or cosmological thought.

Ancient polytheists made many distinctions between different kinds of divine beings. Living and dead emperors and their kin were never confused with the ancient gods and in iconography, oaths and prayers to them were assigned subordinate places and status (Nock, 1930; Scheid, 1999).

When we can disentangle the agency through which these religious innovations were created, we find local aristocrats, councils, and assemblies taking the formal initiative, with Roman governors sometimes involved in a secondary role. Before and behind this we must assume there were negotiations over what would be acceptable and welcome, locally and in the center, and in some cases it is likely Romans took the lead. For example, the creation of parallel cult organizations for Greek cities and Roman citizens, at about the same time in the two neighboring provinces of Asia and Bithynia-Pontus in 29 BCE, is implausible without the involvement of Octavian, based at Pergamum at the time (Madsen, 2016). Equally, the forms of provincial cult created at Lyon, Cologne, Colchester, and some other western centers owed so little to local ritual traditions it is difficult not to see Roman initiative as predominant. Yet if we put origins aside, the new cult organizations and ritual performances established in the first century CE did succeed in engaging the participation of the wealthiest provincials, who competed at considerable personal expense to hold priesthoods. Imperial cult has been seen as a form of gift exchange, a device through which a new temporal order was naturalized and a divine mandate, a theodicy of good fortune, established for the status quo (Gordon, 1990a, 1990b; Price, 1984).

One of the longstanding obstacles to acceptance of this view of ruler cult was a sense that it was different in kind to the other forms of collective ritual practiced in Rome's provinces. Imperial cult was homage, other cult was proper religion; one was political, the other more spiritual; one was a matter of displays of loyalty, the other more sincere. In fact, the boundary between what we label "imperial cult" and other forms of collective ritual was seamless, and the processes through which rituals were modified or devised to involve the emperor were the same as those more widely used when rituals were invented or adapted to new ends. Ancient polytheisms were never static. Councils and assemblies were frequently called on to consider whether a new festival should be added to the civic calendar, whether new gods should be invited or admitted into the body of those that received public worship, whether land should be allocated for the construction of new temples, and so on. In formal terms the decision whether or not to seek to hold the provincial temple of Claudius or Domitian was no different to debating whether or not to fund an annual festival in honor of Isis.[12]

If the processes through which ruler cult was established are obscure, we know almost nothing of the processes through which specific syncretisms such as Mercurius Dumias and Mars Lenus were agreed. As far as the western provinces are concerned, however, broad consensus has emerged on Latin epigraphic and some comparative evidence, based on what we can infer from colonial and municipal charters.[13] It is broadly agreed that Mediterranean observers, at least, sought to recognize familiar gods under unfamiliar names and rituals (rather as Caesar did in the case of the Gauls), that some equivalences gained widespread acceptance by indigenous groups as well as visitors, and that at the moment when Roman-style polities were constituted in the west, some of these equivalences fed into the stipulations of the public cults. So, for example, at some point around the turn of the millennia, the Roman idea that the chief god of the Gauls was a version of Roman Mercury was accepted by some Gauls (perhaps under the form that Mercury was the name Romans gave to their chief god) and then when the civitas of the Arverni was formed and needed to define its public cults, the cult of Dumias became that of Mercury Dumias. Perhaps there were fierce debates over this. Could Dumias have become Mars Dumias? Were there voices opposed to making equivalences with alien gods? But the politics of ancient syncretism, a contentious issue today (Stewart & Shaw, 1994), are lost. At a larger scale, the effect was that hundreds or thousands of local male gods came to be represented as variants of just a few, most of them rendered into versions of Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Apollo, Hercules, and Saturn. Mostly no trace of earlier names or images survived. That small part of the population that travelled beyond their own state of origin—most of them male traders, soldiers, and a few landowners—would not have encountered very much religious diversity.

Where detailed regional studies have been conducted, many nuances emerge (Cadotte, 2007; Derks, 1998; Spickermann, 2003, 2008). There were clear regional preferences when it came to which male Roman gods were associated with local deities: Mars was especially popular in northern Gaul and Germany, Saturn in Africa, Hercules on the lower Rhine. Local epithets were used in some areas to differentiate between Martes or Mercurii who were worshipped alongside each other. In other areas they are very rare indeed. The relative popularity of the main Roman gods varied from one area to another, although Jupiter was almost always associated with the chief deity. Most provincial gods are known only under their Roman names, a few sometimes have a local epithet attached, and others (mostly goddesses) appear only under local names such as Rosmerta or Sirona. During the first centuries CE new deities arrived, including Mater Magna–Cybele, Isis, Mithras, and various male

deities from Syria already syncretized with Jupiter. Their take-up in the western provinces was not even, yet all the same they had some claim to be global deities. The situation in the east was more complex. In some areas, local deities had become associated with Greek ones, even before Alexander's conquests, and the world Rome expanded into was full of complex syncretisms. Some could be the basis of further connection to Roman deities, so Syrian Baalim, already connected to Zeuses, might easily be reinterpreted as Jupiters. Once again, we are aware of no controversies over this. Syncretism undoubtedly resulted in a less diverse cosmos, one drawn together by myth and iconography rather than dogma and authority. But the process by which this happened seems neither to have been coordinated nor resisted.

THE BASES OF RITUAL MEDIATION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

White identified rituals as one means by which new relationships were formed on his original middle ground. This seems even truer in Roman antiquity. Several factors help explain how this came about.

The first is the fundamental similarity of religious systems across the eventual territory of the Roman Empire. Virtually all of Rome's subjects were polytheists, virtually all practiced animal sacrifice, virtually all made images of the gods, and most placed them in temples which were in some sense transformations of the houses that humans, or at least powerful humans, inhabited. Ancient gods were often, perhaps mostly, thought of as part of the human communities that worshipped them. As those communities were joined up, so their gods too came into alignment with each other.

Second, when there were differences, Romans and many of their subjects were already equipped to deal with them. Romans of the first century BCE were prepared for variations in the ways the gods were portrayed, local peculiarities of ritual, unusual names, and so on, and this is because they had been living in a world marked by these differences for centuries. Romans were equipped with a range of ways of dealing with these differences, modes of understanding that were philosophical, ethical, ethnographic or even satirical. Many of these responses had been learned from Greeks (and perhaps others) who had been encountering alien religious forms throughout the last millennium BCE. It was widely understood around the Mediterranean that the same god might be called different names by different peoples, and that local images of familiar deities, and even the rituals paid to them in particular places, were often peculiar. These modes of understanding—we might almost say of translation—were inherited from encounters on earlier middle grounds.

All this is one aspect of the general contrast between events in New Spain and those in the Roman provinces. The former resulted from a sudden encounter, accompanied by overwhelming force; the latter were built on centuries of encounters and connections of different kinds between peoples who already had much in common.

Religious mediation in the ancient Mediterranean did have a history. The gods in Homer are everywhere the same. Achaeans, Trojans, Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Phaeacians all knew the same gods and knew them by the same names. When this fiction was created is not clear, but we can be sure that there was no period from the Bronze Age on in which some Greeks would not have been aware that other peoples worshipped other gods. Even in Homer's time the unity of the gods was a mythic convention. By the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, there is a much greater awareness of religious differences in the theological speculations of Ionian philosophers and in Herodotean ethnography. Presumably, Greek adventurers in the Far West and mercenary soldiers in Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt would have been aware of this from the seventh century on. Perhaps it is the absence of prose that conceals earlier knowledge of alien gods. The responses attested in fifth-century material include the construction of equivalences between deities (such as between Isis and Demeter), attempts to resolve apparent inconsistencies (as in the attempt by Herodotus to reconcile the myths and chronologies of Herakles), and the philosophical response of regarding all local knowledge of the divine as limited and incomplete. Alongside these intellectual responses are iconographic ones, such as the representation of Melqart as Herakles (or vice versa), and epigraphic ones, such as the bilingual gold tablets from Pyrgi in Etruria, which offer complementary views of the same cosmos (and ritual) in Etruscan and Punic.[14] Bi- and trilingual texts are known from all around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and in western Asia as well. Most mention gods. These too were artefacts created on middle grounds.

Roman expansion was a bloody business. Even if the human tragedy was not on the same scale as in New Spain, provincial societies underwent convulsive transformations. Yet religious conflict made almost no contribution to the process. Even synoptic studies of provincial revolt have found only a few cases of millenarian leaders, and studies of revolt narratives show that religious dissent was rarely a central theme.[15] There was nothing to rival the entanglement of faith and violence in the Middle Ages or after. On the contrary, ritual offered powerful resources when the time came for mediating new relationships. A shared language of cult and image, of performance and myth, had already been formed on the middle grounds of the

archaic Mediterranean. During and after the chaotic course of Roman conquest it had become a matter of habit to reach for the gods, and they did not disappoint.

NOTES

1. For just a few of the appropriations in relation to the ancient Mediterranean, see Bonnet, 2013; Feeney, 2016, pp. 92–121; Hodos, 2009; Lampinen, 2014; Malkin, 1998a, 2002, 2005; van Dommelen, 1998; Woolf, 2009, 2011b.

2. A particularly useful set of discussions was published in 2006 as "Forum: The Middle Ground Revisited," in volume 63, issue 1 of *William and Mary Quarterly*.

3. See also White, 2006. For similar doubts, see Dietler, 2010, p. 354, note 124. Thoughtful discussion is found in Antonaccio, 2013, with particular reference to Malkin, 2011.

4. Gosden builds on arguments like those of Crosby, 1986; McNeill, 1976.

5. On the rhetoric of world conquest, see Nicolet, 1988. On monuments, see Schneider, 1986; R. Smith, 1988. Gruen (1996) argues that a consistent rhetoric of aggressive expansionism concealed more limited and pragmatic military goals.

6. For a slightly different take on this, perhaps less different than it presents itself, see Johnston, 2017. For the precursors of these developments, see Bickerman, 1952; Gehrke, 2005; Malkin, 1998b.

7. On the archaeology of genocide, see Roymans & Fernández-Götz, 2015; Fernández-Götz, Maschek, & Roymans, 2020. On epistemicide, see Padilla Peralta, 2020, and on the discourse of devastation, see Lavan, 2020.

8. See Herman, 1987, on intermarriage between elites of different ethnic groups in the archaic Mediterranean.

9. Nongbri draws on Asad, 1993; J. Smith, 1998; W. Smith, 1964; and others. For attempts to describe the contrast, see North, 1992, 2005; Woolf, 2017.

10. Both authors link these exceptions to instances of provincial resistance to Rome; see also Bowersock, 1987; Momigliano, 1987.

11. Hopkins (1978, pp. 197–242) and Price (1984) developed the modern understanding. Subsequent contributions include Cancik & Hitzl, 2003; Clauss, 1999; Gradel, 2002; Kolb & Vitale, 2016; Lozano Gómez, 2002; McIntyre, 2016; Small, 1996; Woolf, 2008.

12. For the competition for provincial temples, see Burrell, 2004. For the spread of Isis worship around Mediterranean cities, see Bricault, 2004.

13. Key discussions include Scheid, 1991, followed by Derks, 1992; Rives, 1995; Webster, 1995, 1997; Woolf, 1998; Rüpke, 2004, 2006. On *interpretatio Romana*, see Ando, 2005; Rives, 2011. For a general account of provincial religion, see MacMullen, 1981.

14. On Herakles and Melqart, see Bonnet, 1988; Bonnet & Jourdain-Annequin, 1992; Jourdain-Annequin, 1989; Malkin, 2005. Fentress (2013) sets the Pyrgi tablets, and much else, in the context of shared understandings among Mediterranean elites.

15. On millenarian movements, see Dyson, 1971, 1975. On the relativization of their significance, see Goodman, 1987; Momigliano, 1987. On provincial revolts more generally, see Gambash, 2015; Lavan, 2017; Woolf, 2011a.

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2

A Long Way to Become Christian

Romans, Hungarians, and the Nahua

György Németh

PAGAN ICONOGRAPHY ON CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS

The tombstone of Licinia Amias, one of the earliest Christian funerary inscriptions from the city of Rome, was found in the Vatican. It is dated to the turn of the second and third centuries CE.[1] There is a wreath depicted in the top of the stele with the letters *D* and *M* on either side, then we can see a line in Greek and the image of two fish with an anchor, and two lines in Latin survive beneath the image:

D(is) [image of wreath] *M(anibus)*

IXTHYC ZŌNTŌN

[image of anchor and two fish]

Liciniae Amiati be-
ne merenti vixit
. . .

[To the Manes. Fish of the living. To Licinia Amias, of worthy merit, lived . . .][2]

In addition to common Christian symbols (wreath, fish, and anchor) and the expression *IXTHYC ZŌNTŌN* ("fish of the living," referring to Jesus Christ), an obvious pagan dedication to the Manes (deified spirits of the deceased), *Dis Manibus*, is also apparent in this inscription. For a monotheist believer, not even a single other god is acceptable, but this approach was clearly ignored by the stonemason, who on the other hand

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c002

could not accept a Roman funerary stele without the *D M* abbreviation, no matter its meaning. Therefore, the tombstone of Licinia Amias is not a secret message by a pagan rebel but rather a palpable piece of evidence proving that certain pagan phrases were acceptable even to Christians, who did not speculate on the genuine meaning of *D M* but knew that this abbreviation must be inscribed on a proper tombstone.

Another example is provided by the mosaic representation of the Baptistery of Neon in Ravenna. The central medallion of the dome depicts the baptism of Jesus Christ in the River Jordan. The main figures of the fifth-century mosaic are those of Saint John the Baptist, of Christ himself, and of the Holy Spirit represented by the dove, but we can also see an aged man sitting on the right side of the picture: the god of River Jordan. According to the remark of Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (2010),

> many modern viewers find the figure of the river Jordan confusing, but it would not have seemed unusual in the fifth century. Personifications of rivers as gods and goddesses were common in Greek and Roman art, and were quite commonly adapted for use in early Christian art, for example, for the Four Rivers of Paradise. (p. 99)

Obviously, the Christian mosaic makers did not find any fault in depicting pagan river deities in Christian mosaics, since they only followed the iconographic traditions of river representations.

AMULETS AND CURSES

The above introductory examples intended to explain that no uniform Christian society existed in the Roman Empire, not even as late as the fifth century, because the practice of pagan traditions was still alive, and because there was a constant interaction between Christian and pagan ideas and iconographies (Monaca, 2020). For instance, pagan magicians applied numerous Christian phrases in their magical texts. Even the name of Christ himself is attested as one of the many demons invoked (Németh, 2015). Jesus Christ of Nazareth is referred to in six small lead containers found in the Anna Perenna sanctuary in Rome. The drawing on each container represents a figure of a demon with a bird head and human legs,[3] and with a peculiar inscription on its belly:

ICHNOP

CHNKTH

THTH

as it is read in one container, whereas five others read:

ICHNOY

CHNKTH

THTH

In my paper cited above, I have suggested the following solution for the abbreviation:

IĒSOUS

CHRISTOS

NAZŌRAIOS

O PAIS, respectively *O YIOS* = the Son

CHRISTOS

NAZŌRAIOS

KAI THEOS

THEOS THEOS

[Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, the Son, Christ, the Nazarene, and God, God, God].

Christian amulets also used pagan elements at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries. An excellent example is provided by a Christian papyrus amulet of unknown origin (probably Egypt), which includes a prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, but it also addresses *Ablanathanalba*, a common phrase in the pagan magical tradition, and moreover, it contains seven *charaktēres* [magic signs].

a///ee ēēē iiiii ooooo yuuuuu ōōōōōōō

Ablanathanalba . eō[A]krammachamari kaicha

k.aia, kýrie th[e]e, kyríai theôn pántōn, therápeuson

Thaēsân . . .

. . . apólyson onómati Iēsoû

Christoû b b b b b b (charaktēres)

(charaktēr) therápeuso[n] Thaēsâ[n], édē éd, tachỳ tachý

[Lord God, Lord of all Gods, heal Thaesas . . . release in the name of Jesus Christ. . . . heal Thaesas, now now, quickly quickly]. (Daniel & Maltomini, 1990, pp. 55–57)

In the years 364 and 365, the canons passed by the Council of Laodicea prohibited clerics from acting as magicians and from preparing phylacteries (Graf, 2013, pp. 304–305). However, the same problem seemed to prevail two hundred years later, as we can see it in a conciliar resolution from Africa:

diaconus aut clericus magus aut incantator non sit neque phylacteria faciat [no deacon or priest shall be a sorcerer or spell singer, nor make amulets]. (Graf, 2013, p. 305)

As it seems, the pagan world and the Christian world were not sharply separated from each other in late antiquity, and their coexistence was considered natural by common people. Clear evidence is found in a curse tablet from Bath that lists several dichotomies to define a possible thief: either man or woman, either slave or free, and (unusually) either *gentilis* [pagan] or Christian.

seu gen[ti]lis seu Ch[r]istianus cuaecumque utrum vir utrum mulier utrum puer utrum puella utrum s[er]vus utrum liber mihi Annia[n]o ma‹n›tutene de bursa mea six argentos furaverit tu domina dea ab ipso perexige [whether pagan or Christian, whosoever, whether man or woman, whether boy or girl, whether slave or free, has stolen from me, Annianus, son of Matutina (?), six silver coins from my purse, you, lady Goddess, are to exact (them) from him]. (Tomlin, 1988, p. 232, No. 98)

Pagan magic was palpable reality for Christians, and they indeed took the field against it, as is confirmed by the biography of Saint Hilarion (291–371), a hermit who founded Palestinian monasticism. His biography was written by Saint Hieronymus around 390 in Bethlehem. Hilarion exorcised demons and healed the sick. Once he was asked to save the life of a chariot racer from Gaza. Charioteers were often the targets of curse spells, since high-value betting was common in chariot racing, and the prize had to be secured by all possible means. The Gaza charioteer may have been struck by a curse of this kind:

Auriga quoque Gazensis in curru percussus a daemone, totus obriguit; ita ut nec manum agitare, nec cervicem posset [al. possit] reflectere. Delatus ergo in lecto, cum solam linguam moveret ad preces, audit non prius posse sanari, quam crederet in

Iesum, et se sponderet arti pristinae renuntiaturum. Credidit, spopondit, sanatus est: magisque de animae, quam de corporis salute exsultavit [A charioteer, also of Gaza, stricken by a demon in his chariot, became perfectly stiff, so that he could neither move his hand nor bend his neck. He was brought on a litter but could only signify his petition by moving his tongue and was told that he could not be healed unless he first believed in Christ and promised to forsake his former occupation. He believed, he promised, and he was healed: and rejoiced more in the saving of the soul than in that of the body]. (Jerome, 2012, Vita Hilarionis, No. 16)

There is another, even more peculiar case, where Saint Hilarion's help was needed to fight off the doings of a pagan sorcerer. The story proves that both pagans and Christians believed in the supernatural powers of magicians and that even a Christian saint could participate in averting spells:

Sed et Italicus eiusdem oppidi municeps Christianus, adversus Gazensem Duumvirum, Marnae idolo deditum, Circenses equos [al. circi equos curules] nutriebat. Hoc siquidem in Romanis urbibus iam inde servabatur a Romulo, ut propter felicem Sabinarum raptum, Conso, quasi consiliorum Deo, quadrigae septeno currant circumitu; et equos partis adversae fregisse, victoria sit. Hic itaque aemulo suo habente maleficum, qui daemoniacis quibusdam imprecationibus et huius impediret [al. praecantationibus et huius praeparet] equos, et illius concitaret ad cursum, venit ad beatum Hilarionem, et non tam adversarium laedi, quam se defendi obsecravit. Ineptum visum est venerando seni in huiuscemodi nugis orationem perdere. Cumque subrideret et diceret: Cur non magis equorum pretium pro salute animae tuae pauperibus erogas? Ille respondit, functionem esse publicam; et hoc se non tam velle, quam cogi: nec posse hominem Christianum uti magicis artibus; sed a servo Christi potius auxilium petere, maxime contra Gazenses adversarios Dei: et non tam sibi quam Ecclesiae Christi insultantes. Rogatus ergo a fratribus qui aderant, scyphum fictilem quo bibere consueverat, aqua iussit impleri, eique tradi. Quem cum accepisset Italicus, et stabulum, et equos, et aurigas suos, rhedam, carcerumque repagula aspersit. Mira vulgi exspectatio: nam et adversarius hoc ipsum irridens, diffamaverat; et fautores Italici sibi certam victoriam pollicentes exsultabant. Igitur dato signo hi advolant, illi praepediuntur. Sub horum curru rotae fervent, illi praetervolantium terga vix cernunt. Clamor fit vulgi nimius [Codd. nimius attollitur]: ita ut Ethnici quoque ipsi concreparent, Marnas victus est a Christo. Porro furentes adversarii, Hilarionem maleficum Christianum ad supplicium poposcerunt. Indubitata ergo victoria et illis, et multis retro Circensibus plurimis fidei occasio fuit

> [Another story relates to Italicus, a citizen of the same town. He was a Christian and kept horses for the circus to contend against those of the Duumvir of Gaza who was a votary of the idol god Marnas. This custom, at least in Roman cities, was as old as the days of Romulus and was instituted in commemoration of the successful seizure of the Sabine women. The chariots raced seven times round the circus in honor of Consus in his character of the God of Counsel. Victory lay with the team which tired out the horses opposed to them. Now the rival of Italicus had in his pay a magician to incite his horses by certain demoniacal incantations and keep back those of his opponent. Italicus therefore came to the blessed Hilarion and besought his aid, not so much for the injury of his adversary as for protection for himself. It seemed absurd for the venerable old man to waste prayers on trifles of this sort. He therefore smiled and said, "Why do you not rather give the price of the horses to the poor for the salvation of your soul?" His visitor replied that his office was a public duty and that he acted not so much from choice as from compulsion, that no Christian man could employ magic, but would rather seek aid from a servant of Christ, especially against the people of Gaza who were enemies of God, and who would exult over the Church of Christ more than over him. At the request therefore of the brethren who were present, he ordered an earthenware cup out of which he was wont to drink to be filled with water and given to Italicus. The latter took it and sprinkled it over his stable and horses, his charioteers and his chariot, and the barriers of the course. The crowd was in a marvelous state of excitement, for the enemy in derision had published the news of what was going to be done and the backers of Italicus were in high spirits at the victory which they promised themselves. The signal is given; the one team flies toward the goal, the other sticks fast: the wheels are glowing hot beneath the chariot of the one, while the other scarcely catches a glimpse of the opponents' backs as they flit past. The shouts of the crowd swell to a roar and the heathens themselves with one voice declare Marnas is conquered by Christ. After this the opponents in their rage demanded that Hilarion as a Christian magician should be dragged to execution. This decisive victory and several others which followed in successive games of the circus caused many to turn to the faith]. (Jerome, 2012, Vita Hilarionis, No. 20)

In the days of Hilarion, the pagan cult of Marnas still existed, and Christians had to stand up against it.

Even today, some pagan elements can be found in the everyday practice of European Christianity. Memory of the *suovetaurilia* procession is reflected in the cult of San Zopito in the town of Loreto Aprutino (Carrol, 1992, pp. 46–48). The procession with a white ox is held forty days before Whit

Monday. However, San Zopito, a saint excelling in averting demons and in harvest forecast, did actually never exist. The name itself derives from a misunderstood inscription. In fact, the term *sospitus in domino* means "asleep in the arms of the Lord," but *sospitus* was taken as a name. This mistake gave birth to a saint with ancient Roman components in his cult.

There is another, even more complex case: the cult of the Eleusinian Demeter, which was adopted by Christianity within the cult of Saint Demetrius. Though Demetrius was male, he became the patron of agriculture, similar to the ancient goddess Demeter. A certain Saint Demetra is worshipped only in Eleusis, and her legend includes the kidnapping of her daughter, which is clearly reminiscent of the ancient myth. In 1940, a number of local newspapers reported that Saint Demetra or the goddess Demeter personally appeared on a coach heading to Athens (Picard, 1940, pp. 102–104).

PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN HUNGARY

In 997, the pagan Koppány [Cupan] lead a rebellion against Grand Prince Stephen (later King Saint Stephen I of Hungary), but Koppány was defeated and cruelly punished, as described by the *Chronicon Pictum* [Illuminated Chronicle]:

> *In eodem autem prelio Vencellinus comes interfecit Cupan ducem, et largissimis beneficiis a Beato Stephano, tunc Duce, remuneratus est. Ipsum vero Cupan Beatus Stephanus quatuor partes fecit mactari; primam partem misit in portam Strigoniensem, secundam in Vesprimiensem, tertiam in Iauriensem, quartam in Erdel*
>
> [In this battle, count Vecellin killed Duke Koppány and Blessed Stephen, then still Duke, rewarded him with very large benefits. However, Blessed Stephen had Koppány cut into four parts; he sent the first part to the gate of Esztergom, the second to that of Veszprém, the third to that of Győr, and the fourth to Transylvania]. (Szentpétery, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 313)

Converting his people to Christianity, Stephen took severe actions against paganism throughout his life. According to the *Life of Saint Stephen* by Hartvik, the king, who had lost his heir, offered the holy crown and the country to the Virgin Mary the day before he died, that is, on August 14, 1038:

> *Regina celi reparatrix inclita mundi, tuo patrocinio sanctam ecclesiam cum episcopis et clero, regnum cum primatibus et populo subpremis precibus committo, quibus ultimum vale dicens manibus tuis animam meam commendo*

[Queen of heavens, renowned restorer of the world, to your patronage I commit the holy Church with the bishops and priests, the country with the lords and the people, and bidding a last farewell to them I commend my spirit into your hands]. (Szentpétery, 1999, Vol. 2, p. 431)

Hence the Boldogasszony [Blessed Woman], who had played a major role in the faith of the pagan Hungarians, was identified with the Virgin Mary. This identification facilitated the adoption of Christianity by the Hungarians. Therefore, one of the most widespread Hungarian hymns to Mary begins with addressing "Boldogasszony, our Mother." The fact that the pre-Christian Boldogasszony is still venerated in the name Babba Mária [Beautiful Mary] among Csango Hungarians in Romania was discovered only in 1973. When the weather is rough, the Csangos offer her the following prayer:

Babba Mária,
Carry away the rough weather,
where dogs do not bark,
where cocks do not crow,
where no bread is baked with leaven!
(Daczó, 1981, p. 232)

In other words: may the Boldogasszony take the storms away to a place where no people live, so that it may cause no damage.

King Saint Ladislaus of Hungary promulgated his first law book in 1092, and §22 reads:

Quicunque ritu gentium, juxta puteos sacrificaverint, vel ad arbores, et fontes, et lapides, obtulerint, reatum suum bove luant

[Those who perform sacrifice according to pagan rituals beside wells, or who bring gifts to forests or fountains or stones, shall pay an ox for their crime]. (Nagy, 1899, p. 56)

The severe measures of Saint Stephen and his descendants apparently failed to perfect the conversion of pagan Hungarians to Christianity. Punishments held back public pagan sacrifice, yet traces of pre-Christian religion have endured until today. Collecting pieces of traditional folk music in December 1968, Hungarian folklorist Zsuzsanna Erdélyi recorded a previously unknown, long "prayer" from a ninety-eight-year-old woman in Somogy county, south Hungary. Within a period of four years, she managed to record six hundred pieces of text containing numerous pagan elements, the existence of which was not acknowledged, let alone consented by the Church (Erdélyi, 1976, p. 11). In 1976

she published her 770-page collection of folk prayers, some of the items being either pagan or Christian with pagan elements. A great number of prayers begin with the name of the Virgin Mary, but as we have seen, the Boldogasszony was originally a pagan deity, whom Saint Stephen identified with the Virgin Mary and who was incorporated in the Hungarian Christian cult while keeping her primary name: the Boldogasszony. Therefore, folk prayers containing no other Christian element but the name of the Virgin Mary or of the Boldogasszony are Christian only on the surface, and they in fact have kept their ancient roots. The following example is one of the most widespread incantations against illness recorded on the Great Hungarian Plain:

Fődédesanyám, Fődédesanyám, torkom fáj!
Senkinek se mondom, csak neked panaszlom: gyógyíts meg!

[My Mother Earth, my Mother Earth, I have a sore throat!
I will not tell it to anyone but to you: heal me!] (Király, 1990, p. 22)[4]

Another version, also from the Plain:

Földöreganyám, csak neked panaszlom:
torkom fáj, gyógyítsd meg!

[My old Mother Earth, I complain only to you:
I have a sore throat, heal it!]

During the incantation, the patient is supposed to hug and kiss the ground or an oven (Cs. Pócs, 1967, p. 30).

Cs. Pócs remarks that this prayer may have been borrowed from other peoples, as Mother Earth has not been attested as a pagan Hungarian deity, however, she has no doubt that this widespread incantation is profoundly pagan, containing not even a single Christian element. It is also worth adding that academic research and even folklore studies had almost completely ignored incantation texts like this until the 1970s. The collection of Erdélyi has radically changed our picture about pagan Hungarian traditions surviving under the Christian surface. As for the Babba Mária in Transylvania, Daczó (1981) gives the following explanation:

> However, since the people living in these scattered forest settlements rarely met priests, they easily maintained and practiced their ancestral beliefs beside their superficial Christian religion. This is how the veneration of Babba Mária could survive so openly and clearly. All the more so, because this cult, as we have seen above, offered them a straight and easy way to the Christian God. (p. 238)

PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN MEXICO

The described Hungarian development shows striking resemblance to what happened in Mexico, when the ancient Nahua goddess Tonantzin was identified with the Virgin Mary. This was not particularly difficult, because the Aztec goddess was no less similar to Mary than Babba Mária. This is attested by a poem, *Tonantzin* (Our Lady), composed by Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz in 1676, the first three stanzas of which are as follows:

Tla ya timohuica,
totlazo Zuapilli,
maca ammo, Tonantzin,
titechmoilcahuíliz.

Ma nel in Ilhuícac
huel timomaquítiz,
¿amo nozo quenman
timotlanamíctiz?

In moayolque mochtin
huel motilinizque;
tlaca amo tehuatzin
ticmomatlanílíz.

Our Lady,
that now you go.
Beloved Mother,
do not leave us.

Even ecstatic
within the Glory,
maybe you do not
try to remember?

No one with you
will become lost:
due to your hand
that will take him.
(Cruz, 1988, p. 126)

In his *Imagen de la Virgen María Madre de Dios de Guadalupe*, published in 1648, Miguel Sánchez (1594–1674) was the first author to record that in December 1531, Mary appeared to a Nahua named Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill (Martínez

Baracs, 2001, p. 154). According to tradition, there had once been a sanctuary dedicated to Tonantzin in the same place. For the Nahua, this apparition proved that Mary was the same as Tonantzin, whose name was composed of the possessive prefix *to-* "our," the nominal root *nān* "mother," and the honorific suffix *-tzin*. Tonantzin was a telluric mother goddess. To commemorate the apparition, the feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe (still called Tonantzin by the Nahua) is celebrated on the twelfth of December to this day. At first, incorporating the goddess into the Catholic cult did not seem easy. The Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún strongly condemned such integration.[5]

Becoming Christian was neither a rapid nor a smooth process for any of these peoples. However, it could be accelerated to some extent if the Catholic Church accepted or at least tolerated the adoption and integration of elements of certain local cults. This, of course, led to the development of local variants of Catholicism. Worshipping the Boldogasszony or even Tonantzin would have been unthinkable in Rome. Nevertheless, it facilitated the adoption of the Virgin Mary by the Hungarians and the Nahua.

However, there is also a difference compared to the Hungarian example. The Catholic Church in Mexico was aware that identifying Tonantzin with Mary could be an expedient tool in winning Nahua believers. Consequently, the cult of Tonantzin flourished in public and with the help of the priests, unlike the cult of Babba Mária, which was worshipped despite the intentions of the church. However, we can rightly assume that the perception of Tonantzin was different for a Catholic priest or a Christianized Nahua, even if they both recognized Mary in Tonantzin. The roots of reverence for ancient deities go very deep in the history of human communities.

There is a long way from paganism to Christianity; it is no wonder that the progress was very slow in the first centuries after Christ. In Hungary, even a thousand years after the adoption of Christianity, we find traces of the ancient gods, while in New Spain and independent Mexico the Blessed Mary was worshipped as a reformulation of the ancient goddess Tonantzin long after the indigenous peoples' conversion to the Catholic faith.

NOTES

The writing of this chapter was supported by the Hungarian Research Fund (OTKA K 134319) and by the project Religious Acculturation in the Old World and Colonial America: A Comparative Analysis of the Rhetoric of Alterity and the Construction of the Other (2015–2018; Spain, Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain, project HAR2014-57067-P). The author's ORCID iD is 0000-0001-8708-8102.

1. Friggeri, Granino Cecere, & Gregori, 2012, pp. 568–569.

2. Greek texts, here and throughout this volume, have been transliterated to Latin script in keeping with the editorial style used in this chapter and to make this research accessible to a wide range of readers.—Eds.

3. Thus, it cannot be identified with the snake-legged Anguiped, often (erroneously) called Abrasax.

4. This version was recorded in 1970.

5. For a substantial treatment of the issue, see Wolf, 1958. The cult of Tonantzin is described in detail by Burkhart, 2001, and León-Portilla, 2000. For a thorough analysis of Tonantzin and other Aztec deities, see Nicholson, 1971, and Ruether, 2005, pp. 190–219. For more information on Sahagún, see Olivier, in this volume.

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3

Human Sacrifice and the Religion of the Other

Barbarians, Pagans, and Aztecs

Francisco Marco Simón

translated by
emma chesterman

Recent years have seen a revived interest in the subject of human sacrifice,[1] a heuristic category which, despite the criticism that has been directed against it, enables dialogue between specialists in archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and the history of religions.[2] The theme of this chapter is the use of human sacrifice as a denigratory characteristic in the conceptualization of others' religion, in three different historical moments of contact between religions and by three distinct actors: firstly, the Greco-Latin writers, in their perception of societies qualified as barbarian; later, early Christian authors, who emphasize this extreme form of sacrifice as a characteristic feature of "pagan" religions; and, lastly, European chroniclers as they describe the religious systems of the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica. These three literary representations of religious otherness must be checked against data from archaeology and other types of nonliterary documentation to contrast the visions of Greco-Latin authors about the barbarians and of Christian sources, both in the polemic against "paganism" and also in the religious colonization of the Mesoamerican indigenous consciousness in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[3]

HUMAN SACRIFICE AS THE EPITOME OF BARBARITY

The Greeks and Romans considered human sacrifice *xénos*, the epitome of barbarity and consequently the object of a double repudiation: spatial (of the barbarian periphery) and temporal (of the earliest times and

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c003

the Golden Age, now superseded by historical times). While for the barbarians their practice of human sacrifice was inherent to local customs and standard practice, legal and even sacred, integrated into their political systems and ancestral traditions, in the Hellenic world it had always been presented as an extreme solution of the past, when the polis's institutions stopped functioning and when the Greeks faced total elimination. Since the Greeks could not recall that their forebears had resorted to human sacrifice without aversion, they inevitably justified it as a result of oracular instruction. A pattern thus arose which would remain widespread until the Hellenistic-Roman period: fault → calamity → oracle → human sacrifice as a last resort to try to overcome an extreme situation (Bonnechere, 1994). Be that as it may, the historian observes in the ancient Greek world a marked disparity between the scarcity of human sacrifices in ritual and their proliferation in myth and iconography (Hughes, 1991).[4]

Of the seventeen passages from Herodotus on human sacrifice, only one (Hdt. 7.197: Athamas of Thessaly) concerns Greece. Even this case, however, discusses a rather marginal space in Greek civilization, Thessaly, a world significantly associated with magical practices. The wealth of detail provided in the foreign examples—Scythian, Egyptian, Punic—contrasts, furthermore, with the brevity of the passage about Greece. As Henrichs (1980, p. 197) points out, the well-known descriptions, despite their heterogeneity, have one thing in common: their extent and the degree of detail are in inverse proportion to their reality and historical credibility.[5]

The Greek literary sources present a dominant paradigm: that of the sacrifice and offering of the *parthenos* [virgin]. Loraux (1982) has indicated that the women were given a "sacrificial death" (figure 3.1), in counterpoint to the masculine death on the field of battle.[6] In this respect, the contrast could not be clearer with human sacrifices in the Mesoamerican world, where the typical victim was male rather than female, although rituals where women were sacrificed are known as *īīxiptlah* [divine image] of the goddesses Toci and Chicomecoatl, which we know from Friar Diego Durán (Chávez Balderas 2010, p. 319).

The Greek sources, then, present human sacrifice as the inverse of their normative system, something *ánomos*, illegal. The picture is relatively similar in the Roman world. Here, the texts contain mythical sacrifices to Saturn (Dion. Hal. 1.38.2), Vulcan (Fest. 274L; Varro *Ling*. 6.20), and Mania, mother of the Lares (Macrob. *Sat*. 1.7.34). The dialogue that Ovid relates between Numa and Jupiter (Arn. *Adv. nat*. 5.1; Ov. *Fast*. 3; Plut. *Num*. 15.14) reflects both the cruelty of the Romans' supreme god and the magistrate's wish to exercise his liberty as the representative of the community overcoming the practice of human sacrifice.

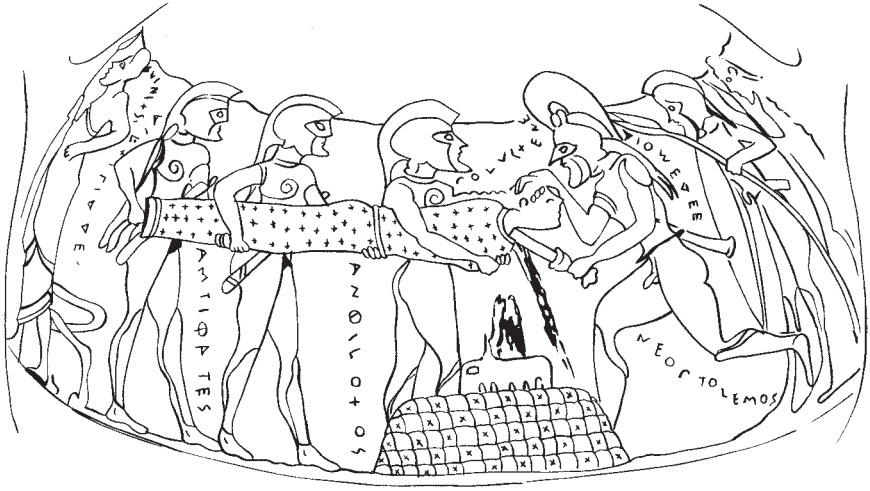

Figure 3.1. *Polixena, royal daughter of Trojan King Priam and Hecuba, is sacrificed by Neoptolemus at the tomb of Achilles. Sixth-century* BCE *Greek base painting. Drawing by María Gabriela Guevara Sánchez, after Detienne & Vernant 1989, figure 10.*

There are also traditions such as that of the *sexagenarii de ponte*: each year a sixty-year-old man was thrown from the bridge into the Tiber (Cic. *Rosc. Am.*, 35.100; Fest. 66L) as a victim of Dis Pater (Fest. 450L), a tradition that was said to have been subdued by Herakles when he passed through Rome and of which an echo remained in the ceremony of the Argei (Marcos Casquero, 1987).

Hellenistic works like those by Istros and Monimus that contained information about human sacrifices have not been preserved, but among all the references to human sacrifice as the systematic mark of barbarity, a few well-known cases stand out in the information provided by Cicero on the Tauri from Pontus, Busiris in Egypt, the Gauls, and the Carthaginians (Cic. *Rep.* 3.13–15); Plutarch on the Gauls, the Scythians, and the Carthaginians (Plut. *De superst.* 13.171 B–D); and other late antique authors like Porphyry (*Abst.* 2.53, 3–56, 10) and the Christian authors Clemens Alexandrinus (Clem. Al. *Protr.* 3.42), Athenagoras (*Leg.* 26.2), Tertullian (Tert. *Apol.* 9.5), Minucius Felix (Min. Fel. *Oct.* 6.1), Origen (*C. Cels.* 5.27), and Lactantius (Lactant. *Div. inst.*, 1.21.2). The Lemnians, Cypriots, Cimbri, Lusitanians, and Albanoi complete the list of the barbarians practicing human sacrifice, as well as the nomadic outlaws of Greek novels (Frankfurter, 2011, p. 77, note 11, with references).

Thus, the Greco-Latin authors present these practices of human sacrifice as typical of the barbarian peoples, or, when found in their own world, belonging

Figure 3.2. *The wicker man of the Druids. Illustration from* A Tour in Wales *by Thomas Pennant (1781). Image inspired by Julius Caesar's famous description of humans being sacrificed by being burned in a wicker framework (Caes.* BGall. *6.16.4). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Wicker_Man_of_the_Druids.jpg*

to past times (although in Cyprus they persisted until Hadrian's rule). In any case, these savage rites would have been eradicated by the civilizing actions of Rome, which, we are told, suppressed the human sacrifices performed by the Druids (figure 3.2) in the times of Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius (Plin. *NH*, 30.13; Suet. *Claud.* 25). In contrast with this picture painted by the Greco-Latin sources, however, the reality is very different. Not only did human sacrifice not constitute the cornerstone of the Celts' religious systems, but it was instead an exceptional recourse in situations of extreme distress (Aldhouse-Green, 2018; Marco Simón, 1999). Human sacrifice happened among the Romans themselves, who were willing to sacrifice a pair of Greeks and another of Gauls by burying them alive in the Forum Boarium in crisis situations in 228, 216, and

114–113 BCE, in practices that I have interpreted in terms of *piaculum* [expiatory offering], *devotio hostium* [devotion to the enemy], and *obligamentum magicum* [magical obligation] (Marco Simón, 2019).

In contrast to the story of the apotheosis of Romulus (Enn. *Ann*. 112–116; Livy 1.16, etc.), other versions speak of his death and dismemberment by the senators (Dion. Hal. 2.56; Flor. 1.1.17; Plut. *Rom*. 27; Val. Max. 5.3.1), giving a mythical sociogenic slant to the mytheme of cosmogonic sacrifice of a primordial being present in other Indo-European spheres in the figures of Ymir, Tuisto, and Yama (Puhvel, 1987, pp. 284–290). Various sources also transmit the murder of Remus at the hands of his brother, in what undoubtedly constitutes an example of foundational sacrifice (*Bauopfer*) (Wiseman, 1995). The embarrassment that this ritual death caused the Romans, by contrast, gave the Christians an opportunity to attack. Justin Martyr (Justin. *Apol*. 28.2.8) describes the reaction of the Aetolians in 293 BCE: "What kind of people are the Romans? . . . they even founded their city with the death of one of their own, and drenched the foundation of their walls with the blood of a brother." This text is practically identical to Lucan's passage "*fraterno primi maduerunt sanguine muri*" [the first walls were impregnated with fraternal blood] (Luc. *Phars*. 1.95), as well as Propertius's "*caeso moenis firma Remo*" [the firm walls with the dead/fallen Remus] (Prop. 3.9.50) and Florus's "*Prima certe victima fuit munitionemque urbis novae sanguine suo consecravit*" [The first victim fortified the new city with his blood] (Flor. 1.1.8), which demonstrates the consistency of the historiographic tradition that presents the death of Remus as a foundational sacrifice.

A coalition of Samnites, Etruscans, and Gauls caused terror in Rome in 296 BCE, and the bad omens prompted the "seers" to advocate a human sacrifice (Zonar. 8.1). After the triumph at Sentinum the following year, a temple was consecrated to Victory. This temple, identified in 1981 on the western part of the Palatine and excavated by Patrizio Pensabene, included a tomb alongside the city wall which has been interpreted as a foundational human sacrifice (Wiseman, 1995, p. 124). This indicates that these extraordinary practices were not alien in the history of Rome. Archaeology also confirms the interment of human victims in the foundations of buildings in Britannia in the second century CE, for example in Verulamium (Aldhouse-Green, 2018, pp. 17–18, 81; Wiseman, 1995, p. 207, note 110). Although a *senatus consultu* [decree of the senate] banned human sacrifices in Rome in 97 BCE, in the year 46 Caesar sacrificed one of the mutinying soldiers, according to Cassius Dio (43.24.3), and in 40 BCE Octavian sacrificed captives from Perusia on Julius Caesar's altar (Cass. Dio 48.14.4; Sen. *Clem*. 1.11.1, Suet. *Aug*. 15).[7]

It should also not be forgotten that pagan historiography itself made human sacrifice a typical feature of the cruel behavior of anti-senatorial emperors as well as particular Greek tyrants, such as Apollodorus of Cassandreia (Diod. Sic. 22.5.1) and schemers like Caligula (Cass. Dio 37.30.3; Flor. 2.12.4; Plut. *Cic*. 10.4; Sall. *Cat*. 22.1–2). Christian authors recycled these examples of internal "barbarization" to characterize the emperors most hostile to Christians, as they did with Valerian (Euseb. *Hist. eccl*. 7.10.4), Maxentius (Euseb. *Hist. eccl*., 8.14.1–5, *Vit. Const*. 1.36) or Julian (Theod. Cyr. *HE* 3.21–22) (Rives, 1995, pp. 72, 79, note 67).

PAGANISM AND HUMAN SACRIFICE

"*Sacrificiorum aboleatur insania*" [Let the insanity of sacrifices be abolished] (*Cod. Theod*. 16.10.2) is the regulation that tried to eradicate the centrality of the institution of sacrifice in ancient cultures. The debate, however, had already arisen in Hellenic thought as early as Theophrastus, in a line that would continue to Lucian of Samosata and Porphyry (Stroumsa, 2005, pp. 108–110), and also emerged in Judaism, which increasingly tended to substitute sacrifice with prayer in a ritual without priests and without blood sacrifices (Stroumsa, 2005, pp. 116–117). This was a tendency that, from the late second century into the third, was also shared by Mithraism, Neoplatonism, and Christianity (Elsner, 1995, pp. 157 and following).

From the Christian perspective, human sacrifice constituted the best example of the cruelty and monstrosity of pagan divinities, who demanded these practices from their worshippers. The differences established by Greco-Latin sources between barbarians and civilized peoples dissolved in the writings of Christian apologists, who used the theme of human sacrifice as an element that defined "paganism" as a whole,[8] abolishing the chronological and spatial distance that had characterized traditional perspectives on barbarians.

For the Christians, the offerer became the offering: martyrs and virgins were the sacrifice. The conception of martyrdom as (human) sacrifice is already depicted in Ignatius of Antioch who, in the first two decades of the second century, expounded that their flesh, devoured by the wild beasts, was transformed into "pure bread of Christ" (Romans 2). The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* preserves an exceptional account of the perception of martyrdom as sacrifice for both pagans and Christians. Prudentius (Prudent. *Perist*. 4.9–72) also conceived of the death of a martyr as a sacrifice (Petruccione, 1995). In asceticism and martyrdom narratives, bodies are transformed on one hand into supernatural mediators with a certain celestial status and, on the other, into sacred remnants for generations of future worshippers (relics and substances of "blessing")

(Frankfurter, 2004). This is documented both in early Christianity and in what we know of the Mesoamerican indigenous rituals, as we shall see.

The case of a certain group of Jews can be helpful for understanding the evolution in the conceptualization of human sacrifice, because it provides an example of a description of a ritual considered heinous by the writer and practiced by inhabitants of the Roman Empire under the cover of secrecy. As Josephus points out, the grammarian Apion had accused the Jews of sacrificing foreign victims, whom they purportedly cannibalized after holding them sequestered in the Temple of Jerusalem (Joseph. *Ap*. 2.8.92–96, 10.121).[9] Regardless of the reasons for these accusations, there is little doubt that they reflect xenophobia by Apion.

Secretiveness in rituals of human sacrifice was a characteristic imputed not only to Jews, but also to heterodox Christian movements in the post-Constantine era: this was the case with the Cataphrygians and the Montanists (Alonso Venero, 2015, p. 90, note 115). In fact, while the sources that allude to these rumors against the Christians (Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Justin) describe them as accusations by pagan outsiders, there is no evidence of such accusations in the pagan sources, while there are many attestations of their use by Christians to demonize rival groups (Frankfurter, 2011, p. 81; Roig Lanzillotta, 2007). This is the case with Epiphanius (Epiph. *Adv. haeres* 26) on the "gnostic" liturgies of infant cannibalism and sacraments with sexual fluids, and with the apocryphal *Gospel of Judas* (38–40) on proto-Orthodox Christians who killed women and children on the altar. The emphasis on the secret character of these rituals is in line with the growing importance of the private sphere as a ritual space, something that is recognized in the *Codex Theodosianus* and in episcopal sermons, which emphasize the house as a space of magic and subversive practices (Frankfurter, 2011, p. 82; Rives, 1995).

For the Christian sources, therefore, human sacrifice moves from being understood as a cultural distinction,[10] or an example of the moral degradation of the tyrant or political conspirator, to constituting a practice that was widespread among pagans (Alonso Venero, 2015, p. 91), whose religious systems included it more or less habitually, whether in the festivals of Jupiter Latiaris (the *Feriae Latinae* or Latin Festival), in sacrifices to Saturn, or in the interments themselves in the Forum Boarium (Marco Simón, 2019), identifying the gods receiving such abominable victims as demons (Clem. Al. *Protr*. 3.42.1, 8). When Lactantius indicates that human sacrifices persisted among Romans of his time (Lactant. *Div. inst*. 1.21.3), he is making a *retorsio* by attributing the same to pagan accusers as they attributed to the Christians (McGowan, 1994; Rives, 1995, pp. 74–75).

The fundamental depravity of paganism implied by the practice of human sacrifice culminates in the sacrifice of children, traditionally associated with the cult of Cronos (the Punic Baal Hammon and Latin Saturn), whose sacrifices took place in a tophet.[11] Of greater interest for this paper is the connection Justin Martyr (Justin. *Apol.* 2.12.5) draws between the "Mysteries of Cronos" and the rituals of Jupiter Latiaris celebrated in circus games with gladiators, and Tertullian's indication (Tert. *Apol.* 9.2.4) that children continued to be immolated to Saturn in North Africa until the proconsulate of Tiberius (Rives, 1994, pp. 54–55).

In fact, the paradigmatic element in these cases is the parricide and fratricide of the pagan gods themselves, well known through mythology in the figures of Cronos-Saturn and Zeus-Jupiter (figure 3.3), which explained the essence of the heinous ritual of human sacrifice and cannibalism on the part of its followers, as well as the deification of historical figures based precisely on the murders committed, in a line which culminates in Romulus and Caesar, metaphorical slayer of Rome (Alonso Venero, 2015, pp. 103 and following). Indeed, Lactantius writes that identifying murderers with gods is a widespread tendency in pagan society (Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1.18.10). How can the faithful fail to imitate the homicidal behavior of their gods?

Another interesting point is the connection Christian authors draw between the practice of human sacrifice and other moral transgressions supposedly characteristic of the pagans, such as homosexuality or incest. The latter imitates the paradigmatic behavior of the gods, starting with Zeus, in another clear example of *retorsio* of the accusations that various pagan authors made toward Christians themselves.

THE AMERICAN ALTERITY

Dominican Friar Francisco de Aguilar (1977, p. 102), in his account of his experiences of the conquest of central Mexico by Cortés in 1521, was fascinated by the customs of the Aztecs and especially by human sacrifice:

> *Digo, pues, que yo desde muchacho y niño me ocupé en leer y pasar muchas historias persas, griegas, romanas; también he leído los ritos que había en la India de Portugal, y digo cierto que en ninguna de éstas he leído ni visto tan abominable modo y manera de servicio y adoración como era el que éstos hacían al demonio, y para mí tengo que no hubo reino en el mundo donde Dios nuestro Señor fuese tan deservido, y donde más se ofendiese que en esta tierra, y a donde el demonio fuese más reverenciado y honrado*

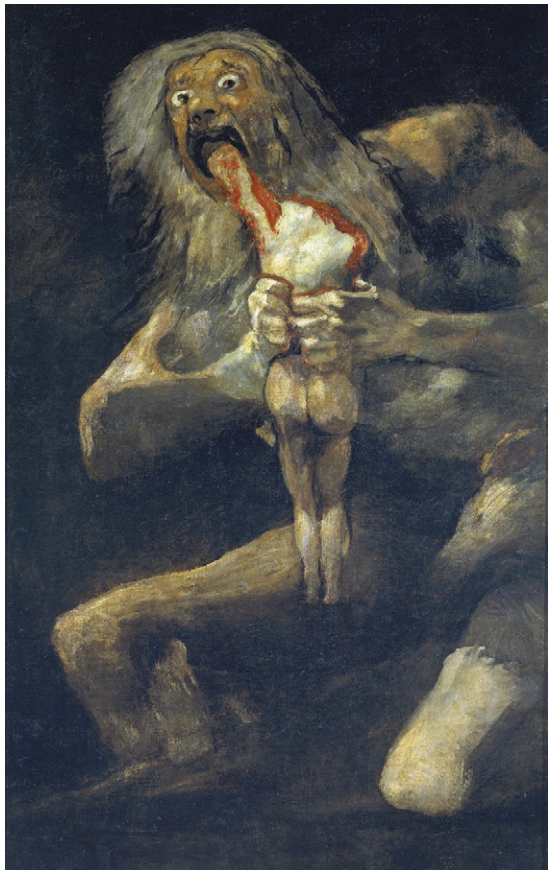

Figure 3.3. Saturn Devouring His Son. *Francisco de Goya (1746–1828). Museo del Prado, Madrid. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francisco_de_Goya,_Saturno_devorando_a_su_hijo_(1819–1823).jpg*

> [I say, then, that since my youth and childhood I have occupied myself with reading and going through many Persian, Greek, and Roman histories; I have also read the rites that existed in Portuguese India, and I say for certain that in none of these have I read or seen such an abominable way and manner of serving and worshipping as that which these people offered to the Devil, and I am convinced that there is no realm on Earth where our Lord God would be as well served, nor where so much offence is committed against him, as in this land, nor anywhere where the Devil is more reverenced and honored].[12]

According to the chronicler Juan Suárez de Peralta (1990, p. 51), whose father was among the companions of Cortés during the conquest of Mexico, the rites and customs of the Indians could be compared not only to those of the Moors but also to those of the ancient nations (*antiguos gentiles*):

sacrificar ombres, tener templos y estatuas de ydolos, y sacrifiçios de sangre, ser supersticiosos en mirar ahueros y tenerlos casi todos los que los antiguos escriuen

[human sacrifice, having temples and statues of idols, worshipping animals, honoring them in processions, fasts, and bloody sacrifices, (the Indians) have almost everything that is written with regard to the ancients].

The comparison drawn by Aguilar and Suárez de Peralta, between the alterity of the ancient Mediterranean and that which they discovered themselves, results in an even more negative judgment of the indigenous Mexicans: in later paragraphs he describes in horror how the Aztec priests used stone knives to cut out the hearts of victims, who were later dismembered and cannibalized (Aguilar, 1977, pp. 202–203; Klein, 2016, p. 257).[13] From the beginning, blood sacrifice occupied a fundamental place in the colonial imagination about Mexico. In the map of the city Mexico Tenochtitlan, sent by Cortés to Charles V (figure 3.4), sacrifice already stands out noticeably in the center of the conquered city (Jáuregui, 2003, figure 2; Nebenzahl, 1990, pp. 73–74).

Human sacrifices and anthropophagy are also prominent ritual elements in the *relaciones geográficas* [geographic relations], the responses of Hispanic colonial authorities compiled between 1578 and 1586 to a standardized questionnaire sent in 1577: the cardiectomy of prisoners of war was followed by selective anthropophagy, but also children were condemned, in this case to obtain water or to seek success in war (Isaac, 2002; Peperstraete, 2018). The practice of human sacrifice among the indigenous Americans is well corroborated by many types of evidence.[14] It seems that there is a contrast between the representations in pre-Hispanic codices (with many blood rituals and few blood sacrifices, in an atmosphere that was above all metaphorical) and postconquest representations emphasizing the spectacular aspects of the sacrifices (Klein, 2016, pp. 258–259; Paradis, 2013). The minimal presence of bloodshed in the oldest codices recalls the sacrificial scenes on Greek pottery, which rarely depict the moment in which the victim (human or, much more commonly, animal) is sacrificed and its blood spilt, since imagery usually focuses on the scenes before or after the death.[15]

In contrast, however, to the difficulty in finding archaeological evidence in the Greek and Roman world, Mesoamerican archaeology has in recent years provided more than obvious evidence of the structural nature that human sacrifice had among the indigenous peoples.[16] Authors such as Mendoza (2007) have analyzed the surviving archaeological and osteological remains and concluded that they confirm the ethnohistorical descriptions of ritual violence and anthropophagy in Mesoamerica, refuting the revisionist interpretations that deny that these practices occurred.

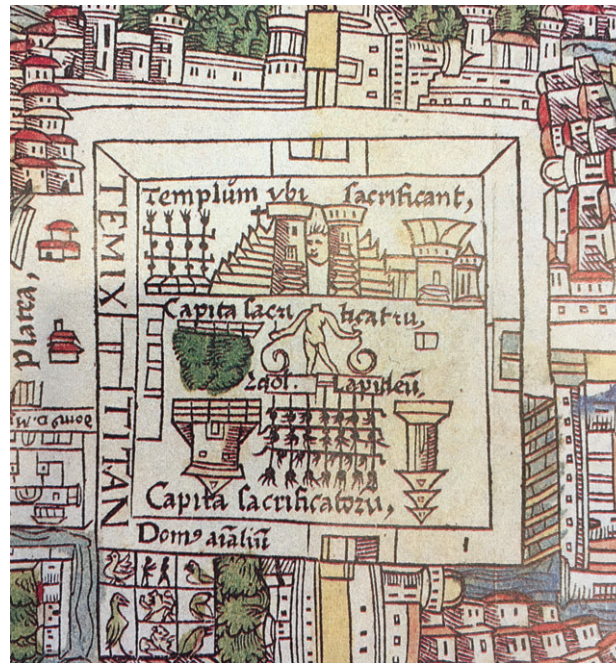

Figure 3.4. *Map of Mexico Tenochtitlan that Cortés sent to Charles V (detail). Reprinted from Nebenzahl, 1990, p. 75.*

The functions and meanings of sacrifice are many, depending on the myths that explain them and their ritual contexts (enthronement, foundations of buildings, floods, droughts, famines, eclipses, etc.). Likewise, these sacrifices took place with many variations: decapitation, drowning, burning, extracting the victim's heart, shooting victims with arrows, throwing them off temples, and sealing them in caves and leaving them to starve (González Torres, 2003, p. 22). There are two main variations in the use of the human body as a privileged instrument of communication with the gods: diurnal sacrifices to the Sun[17] of warriors captured alive in the "flowery wars"—*xōchiyāōyōtl* in Nahuatl—whose hearts were extracted with a flint knife, and the nocturnal decapitation with an obsidian knife of previously purified slaves and women who were sacrificed to the chthonic deities of the Earth and Maize, in which the victim (*īīxiptlah*) personifies the god and willingly dies to benefit the community (Graulich, 2005, p. 320; Rival, 2013, pp. 164, 167, 170). All this only serves to underscore the polysemy inherent in human sacrifice in Mesoamerica (Graulich, 2005; López Luján & Olivier, 2010; Peperstraete, 2012, p. 8), in keeping with its enormous socio-cultural importance. In few places in the world is "sacrificial crisis" better attested than in Mesoamerica, as endemic violence in a society for which the

effectiveness of the ritual serves to achieve group unity as well as its purification and renewal (Eagleton, 2018; Girard, 1983).[18]

The escalation in human sacrifices in the middle of the fifteenth century has been interpreted on one hand as a response to historically documented crises (repeated earthquakes, famines, and big floods) and on the other as a corollary of the conquests and exaction of tribute on the part of the Aztecs of Mexico Tenochtitlan (Rival, 2013, p. 165), a cosmopolitan city which had reached some 200,000 inhabitants by the time of the conquest, having increased tenfold since the year 1200 (Wolf, 1999, p. 157). From the mid-fifteenth century, religious ceremonies constituted permanent theaters in which human sacrifices were an integral element that ritually enacted the mythical sacrifice of the deities who had made creation possible by throwing themselves into a great primordial fire to give rise to the Moon and the Fifth Sun. The continuous renewal of the cosmos—with the rebirth of the Sun and of the human race—required blood offerings and human hearts to avoid a new cycle of decadence and destruction. These ideas were an essential part of Aztec imperial ideology (Duverger, 1979; Wolf, 1999, p. 165).[19]

Frederick Streng (1982, pp. 2–8) wrote that every culture has "problematic states" that it tries to remedy by establishing channels to an "ultimate transformation." For the Aztecs, human sacrifice was the channel to this ultimate transformation, as Kerkhove (2004) pointed out. The oldest sources (Cortés [1985], Díaz del Castillo [2004], Durán [1980], and Sahagún [1988, 2000]) provide very similar figures: every Aztec temple complex dispatched between two and six victims every twenty days; every Aztec city made between 40 and 120 ritual killings a year and, for special occasions such as centenaries or royal funerals, the number rose to hundreds or thousands (Kerkhove, 2004, pp. 136–137).

A considerable section of historiography has considered these figures exaggerated.[20] In any case, the omnipresence of human sacrifice in Aztec and Maya ritual is undeniable, as the evidence from archaeological excavations reveals. The ritual decapitations at the Templo Mayor, the Great Temple of Mexico Tenochtitlan, have recently been studied by Chávez Balderas (2010), who analyzed the remains of seventy-two people, mostly male, and concluded that there was also a priestly class specializing in working with cadavers. Forty-two children were sacrificed at the temple of Tlaloc and especially at the temple of Huitzilopochtli, corroborating the information in the sixteenth-century documentary sources, which indicate that the majority of child sacrifices in moments of crisis sought favors from aquatic and fertility gods (López Luján et al., 2010, p. 368). Likewise, in 2015 the Tower of Skulls was discovered, a

cylindrical wall the preserved part of which is six meters in diameter and almost two meters high, formed by hundreds of human crania, not only of young men but also of women and children from various parts of Mesoamerica. The skulls were amalgamated with a mortar of lime, sand, and pumice gravel and situated at the northeast corner of the platform of the Huēi Tzompantli, the Great Skull Rack, in the sacred precinct of the Templo Mayor; surprisingly, it fits with the description by Andrés de Tapia (1866, pp. 578–591), Cortés's right-hand man and witness to this structure, who describes it thus:

> *Estaban frontero de esta torre [se refiere al Templo Mayor] sesanta o setenta vigas muy altas cuanto un tiro de ballesta, puestas sobre teatro [*sic*] grande hecho de cal y piedra, e por las gradas dél muchas cabezas de muertos pegadas con cal, e los dientes hacia afuera . . . e las vigas apartadas unas de otras poco menos de una vara de medir, e desde lo alto dellos fasta abajo puestos palos cuan espesos cabien, e en cada palo cinco cabezas de muerto ensartadas por las sienes en el dicho polo . . . e quien esto escribe, y un Gonzalo de Umbría, contaron los polos que habie, e multiplicando cinco cabezas cada palo de los que entre viga y viga estaban, como dicho he, hallamos haber ciento treinta y seis mil cabezas, sin las de las torres*
>
> [In front of this tower (referring to the Templo Mayor) there were sixty or seventy very high posts, as high as a shot from a crossbow, placed on a large stage (*sic*) made of lime and stone, and on the steps thereof were many heads of the dead affixed with lime with their teeth facing outwards . . . and the posts were little more than a yardstick apart, and from the top of them to the bottom there were attached crossbeams as closely as possible, and on each crossbeam were five heads of the dead strung by the temples onto that said crossbeam . . . and he who writes this, and one Gonzalo de Umbría, counted how many crossbeams there were, and multiplying five heads per crossbeam by the number of crossbeams which were between the posts, as I have said, we found there to be 136,000 heads, excluding those on the towers].

The structures discovered belong to the years before the arrival of the Spaniards, between 1486 and 1502, and all the skulls analyzed present marks of having been pierced through the temples, and indeed of having been outdoors on the platform of the Huēi Tzompantli (Wade, 2018).[21]

Although much more common than in other cultures, human sacrifice was also in Mesoamerica a recourse to try to alleviate an extreme situation: this seems to be clearly expressed in a scene from the *Madrid Codex* in which the god of death and the god Q attend a sacrifice taking place to the north of the earthly plane, an area associated with plagues, famine, disease, and death.

The purpose of the sacrificial ritual was to ensure communication between men and gods by offering a life, attempting to renew divine energy to guarantee cosmic regeneration and preservation. Several scenes illustrate these concepts persuasively. For example, a classic Maya vase represents a *muan*, a celestial messenger bird belonging to the gods of the underworld, on the body of a sacrificed individual (Nájera Coronado, 2003, pp. 65–66).

According to various evidence, death was a *theosis*, a conversion into a god (*teō-ti*), a mystic state of "twinship"—to borrow a term from León-Portilla (1984, p. 184)—with the Sun god: "It is not true, no it is not true / That we came to live on the Earth / We came here only to dream / We came here only to sleep" (Kherkove, 2004, p. 145). This can explain why the victims liberated by Cortés and Alvarado "indignantly rejected [the] offer of release and demanded to be sacrificed," according to Bernal Díaz del Castillo. Hernán Cortés wrote that the Aztecs "seemed determined to perish more than any race of man known before," and Bernal Díaz del Castillo that they "cared nothing for death in battle and came to us like mad dogs" (as quoted in Kherkove, 2004, p. 142).[22] This passage recalls the descriptions of the ancient Celts, who entered into combat singing, since for them death was only halfway through a long life (Luc. *Phars*. 1.468). The bodies of Celtiberian and Vacceian Hispanian warriors were abandoned on the battlefield to be devoured by vultures, psychopompic birds which transported their souls to the heavens in a ritual sacrifice (Marco Simón, 2008; Sopeña Genzor, 1995). This is a variation of the "noble death" that is also attested among the Aztecs.

Various texts refer to the sacrifice as *neteōtoquiliztli* [the desire to be considered a god]: the victims are *īīxiptlah*: "All the native and Spanish sources on Aztec human sacrifice make it clear that victims were believed to attain full identity with the gods by dying as gods. . . . Posthumously, their remains were treated as actual relics of the gods, which explains why victims' skulls, bones, and skin were often painted, bleached, stored and displayed, or else used as ritual masks and oracles" (Kerkhove, 2004, pp. 155–156). The similarity with the treatment of martyrs' relics seems clear. In both cases, "the theatre of sacrifice intensifies to the limits of the possible the productivity of the human body by decomposing its energy and multiplying it through ritual action" (Rival, 2013, p. 170).

Sacrificial death was also conceived as an opening or portal to the highest reality, hidden by an impenetrable wall (Kerkhove, 2004, p. 146). When the priest performed the cardiectomy with a flint knife [*tecpatl*], holding the victim's still-beating heart, he shouted, "precious fruit of the nopal and the eagle," and then deposited it in a round stone recipient called *cuāuhxīcalli* ("eagle's

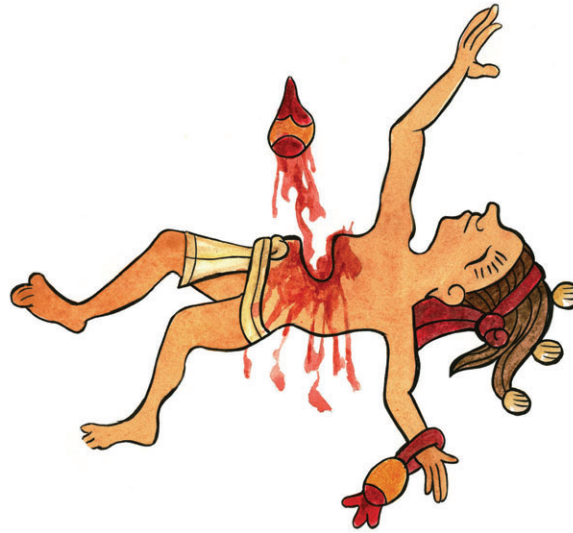

Figure 3.5. *The extraction of the heart according to the* Codex Tudela *(f. 57 r.). Drawing by María Gabriela Guevara Sánchez, after Graulich, 2003, p. 16.*

bowl") (Carrasco, 1996, p. 64). As in the case of the psychopompic vultures with respect to the Celtic warriors fallen in combat, who by consuming their limbs turned them into sacred matter and raised their souls to the heavens, these Nahua texts seem to document a similar psychopompic function for the eagle, whose stone urn contains the hearts of sacrificial victims. The soul of the heart [*tōna*] was considered the seat of the individual as well as a fragment of the Sun's heat [*istli*], which in turn was a heart-soul, "round, hot, pulsating." A scene from the *Codex Tudela* (figure 3.5) represents the heart of a victim flying toward the Sun on a path of blood, and a fragment from the *Madrid Codex* perfectly illuminates this image: "My heart rises: / I fix my eyes upon You, / next to You, beside You, / O Giver of Life!" (Kerkhove, 2004, p. 148).

Another well-known feature in Aztec sacrifice, the "necessary humiliation" of the victim, may be understood in terms of the mythical variants on the death of Quetzalcoatl to allow the Morning Star to rise (Kerkhove, 2004, p. 153). This idea is related to that of sacrifice as expiation (Graulich, 2000), which enables the victims to liberate themselves from the original transgression contained in the myths and enter a happier beyond (Ragot, 2000). According to the mythical accounts, men were indebted to their creators, who sacrificed themselves to create the cosmos and to bring men to life. For this reason, there was another term for blood sacrifice, *nextlāhualli*, "the payment of a debt," and the Nahuatl word *nextlāhualtin*, "payments," refers to the sacrificial victims

(Duverger, 1979; Graulich, 1994, p. 245, 2000; López Austin, 1980, Vol. 1, p. 434; Olivier, 2016, pp. 224–225).

DIVINE SELF-SACRIFICE, CANNIBALISM, AND THE EUCHARIST

With the introduction of Christianity following conquest and colonization, some indigenous Mesoamericans adopted crucifixion as a ritual preceding the death of the victim: the symbol of the cross was identified with the corn plant and became an agricultural deity to whom fertility petitions were made.[23]

An image from the *Codex Fejérváry-Mayer* (p. 37) shows Yacateuctli, god of the *pōchtēcah* [traders], carrying a cross-like motif (which in reality is a crossroads, as indicated by four footprints indicating two paths).[24] Just as the blood shed by Christ watered Adam's skull in Golgotha, bringing about humanity's redemption, the blood shed from Quetzalcoatl's self-mutilated phallus upon the human bones and ashes in Mictlan (the underworld) would bring about the re-creation of humankind.[25] The similarities between the two religious systems embarrassed the evangelizers, who favored images such as that of the cross in the atrium of the church of San Juan Bautista in Coyoacán, which was mounted (without portraying the crucified Christ) on a pedestal formed by a sculpture of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent (López Luján, 2016, figures 16 and 20), symbolizing the triumph over sin.

Associated with human sacrifice, cannibalism has been a central presence in debates around alterity and identity (Arens, 1979; Chicangana-Bayona, 2008; Nagy, 2009; Obeyesekere, 2005). In the sixteenth century, America was constructed culturally, religiously, and geographically as a kind of Canibalia (Isaac, 2002; Jáuregui, 2003, note 2), based on information such as that of Bernal Díaz del Castillo regarding the Indians who used to

> *comer carne humana, así como nosotros traemos vaca de las carnicerías, y tenían en todos los pueblos cárceles de madera gruesa hechas a manera de casas, como jaulas, y en ellas metían a engordar muchas indias e indios y muchachos, y estando gordos los sacrificaban y comían*
>
> [eat human meat, just like we take cow meat from the butcher's shops, and in all their towns they had jailhouses made from thick wood, like cages, and in them they put many Indian women, men, and boys, and when fat they were sacrificed and eaten]. (Díaz del Castillo, 1632/2004, p. 579)[26]

American anthropophagy was a mark simultaneously of similarity and difference between Europe and America, between Christianity and the indigenous religions, and between the metropolis and the imperial periphery (Jáuregui,

2003, p. 201). It is clear that this treatment is not new, because representations of the cannibal have recurred in European imagination since classical antiquity and have been used to justify imperial aggression.

In the rhetoric of alterity, relationships of continuity and contiguity are formulated. The former (the continuity of the European Christian in the New World) imply a process of relative identification. Alterity is marked but leads to similarity: the other (with a small *o*) is a particular feature within the continual and the universal (of humanity, Christianity, and the empire). Relationships of contiguity, in contrast, define the Other (with a capital *O*) as liminal; their alterity is irreducible and threatening. As Hayden White (1976, p. 129) states, these two types of relationship engender different possibilities of praxis: missionary and conversion activity on one hand and on the other, war and extermination.[27] In contrast with this solution, argued by authors like Sepúlveda, the former attitude to religious alterity (a relationship of continuity with the other) is argued by Bartolomé de Las Casas on the basis of cultural comparativism.[28] He establishes the long tradition of paganism and human sacrifices among the Greeks, Romans, Jews, Babylonians, and so forth, and recalls that cannibalism was not unknown in antiquity among the barbarian peoples of the West or the Scythians, in practices which seemed to him crueler that American cannibalism (Las Casas, 1967, Vol. 2, pp. 354–356). His hypothesis is that famine must have been the origin of the practice, and he would even say, in his dispute with Ginés de Sepúlveda (Capdevila, 2007), that sacrifices, although reprehensible, proved the great religiosity of the infidels:

> *La carne . . . de los sacrificados la cocían y aderezaban y la comían como cosa sanctísima y a los dioses consagrada, . . . que por religión y no por otra razón hacían*
>
> [The flesh . . . of the sacrificed they cooked and dressed and ate as the holiest thing, consecrated to the gods . . . which they did for religion and no other reason]. (Las Casas, 1967, Vol. 2, p. 22)

The central ritual of Catholicism was a theophagic act, an anthropophagic sacrifice in which God, incarnated in man (Christ) was both host and guest (Jáuregui, 2003, p. 202).[29] But the evangelists who defended the reality of the Eucharist in Europe fought similar ideas in Amerindian religions. Toribio de Benavente (Motolinía) indicated around 1541 that the Mexicans made maize tamales and that these rolls, transformed into the flesh of Tezcatlipoca, were eaten instead of communion (in a festival embarrassingly close in the calendar to the Christian Easter) (Motolinía, 1988, p. 64). Likewise, Sahagún

(1988, Vol. 1, pp. 37, 94, 161) and Durán (1980, pp. 85–86) indicate that in the twenty-day ritual period called in Nahuatl "Panquetzaliztli" [el levantamiento de banderas] dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, the body of the god made out of seeds was eaten; this was done, according to Acosta (1590/1987, pp. 363–364 [5.25]),

> *A modo de comunión a todo el pueblo . . . [y] recibíanlo con tanta reverencia, temor y lágrimas, que podía admiración diciendo que comían carne y los huesos del dios*
>
> [Like communion to all the people . . . and they received it with such reverence, fear, and tears, that it moved one to admiration, saying that they ate the flesh and bones of the god].

In Mesoamerican ritual cannibalism and in the Christian Eucharist, "the idea of sacrifice broods among other things on the mystery by which life springs from death. . . . One's identity is not one's own, but lies in the keeping of the gods" (Eagleton 2018, pp. 8, 12).[30]

From the sixteenth century, missionaries observed that the sacrifice of Christ and his later ingestion in the form of bread and wine (the Eucharist) had been assimilated by the indigenous peoples, and discovered to their horror that Christianized Maya populations around 1560 were sacrificing children and youths by hanging them on crosses. This prompted the prohibition on introducing or making crucifixes in New Spain in that century: surviving atrial crosses are only adorned with flowers and plants, omitting any allusion to the body of Christ (Lazcarro Salgado, 2013, p. 1). Christ on the cross was the manifestation of the ultimate human sacrifice for the redemption of humanity. After that, no further human sacrifice would be needed or permitted and whenever it occurred, it was considered the work of the Devil. In fact, various conventual complexes bear scenes which include demons carrying out tortures which recall pre-Hispanic practices of human sacrifice: this is the case in the murals in Xoxoteco, Hidalgo, from the sixteenth century, with scenes depicting flayed victims hung on wooden structures (Pastor, 2003, p. 59).

The similarity, therefore, between these rituals of theophagy and the Christian Eucharist caused great embarrassment to the colonizers, which was resolved through the idea of "diabolical mimicry." A fragment of a lunette by Paolo Farinati—datable to 1595—in Villa della Torre, Mezzane di Sotto, Verona, expresses this idea of correspondence and replacement between cannibalism and communion: an allegorical indigenous American turns his back on a cannibalistic feast depicted on his left—wherein a spit skewers a human torso and arm—and takes a crucifix which is on his right (Jáuregui, 2003, p. 209).

Indigenous sacrifice in pre-Hispanic Mexico not only codified the places, times, and manner of death, but also considered the body of the victim to be a compendium of cosmic forces (López Austin, 1988), which separated or united according to the participants' interests. Sahagún (1988) indicates that

> *El señor del cautivo no comía de la carne, porque hacía de cuenta que aquella era su misma carne, porque desde la hora que le cautivó le tenía por hijo, y el cautivo su señor por padre. Y por esta razón no quería comer de aquella carne, empero comía de la carne de los otros cautivos que se habían muerto*
>
> [The captive's lord did not eat the flesh because he pretended that it was his own flesh, because from the moment of capture he considered him a son, and the captive considered his lord a father, and for this reason he did not want to eat of that flesh. He did, however, eat of the flesh of other captives who had died]. (Vol. 2, p. 21)[31]

The lord could not eat the captive's flesh because he would thereby commit an incestuous act. As a result of ferocious combat, captor and captive became close, establishing a relationship that identified them commensurately with their growing distance from who each was before. They each became the other.

A similarity exists between third- and fourth-century Christian authors' descriptions of human sacrifices (as essential to traditional religion, which was described in denigratory terms as "paganism") and those by the Spanish chroniclers of the pre-Hispanic rituals. In both cases, the primary reason to censure the customs of these communities was human sacrifice and anthropophagy; the second was adultery and sexual perversion. In the texts by Ginés de Sepúlveda, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Francisco López de Gómara, and other chroniclers, therefore, as well as in those by the first Christians, they pass from shock generated by blood sacrifices and anthropophagy to outrage spawned by sodomy, promiscuity, adultery, and incest (Pastor, 2003, p. 60).

The Aztecs' sacrifice of children was invoked by Spanish sources as justification for the conquest and conversion of the indigenous peoples, in the same way as the topic had been used by the early Christian sources to emphasize the essential evil of paganism. In 1529, Pedro de Gante wrote that the Aztecs sacrificed and mutilated their children and that their priests survived solely on the flesh and blood of their infant victims. Ruiz Medrano (2007, p. 106) gathers information on child sacrifice in colonial Mexico including in the seventeenth century, although the theme is ignored by colonial artists who worked in Mexico after the death of Sahagún. The oldest chronicles, however, also agree

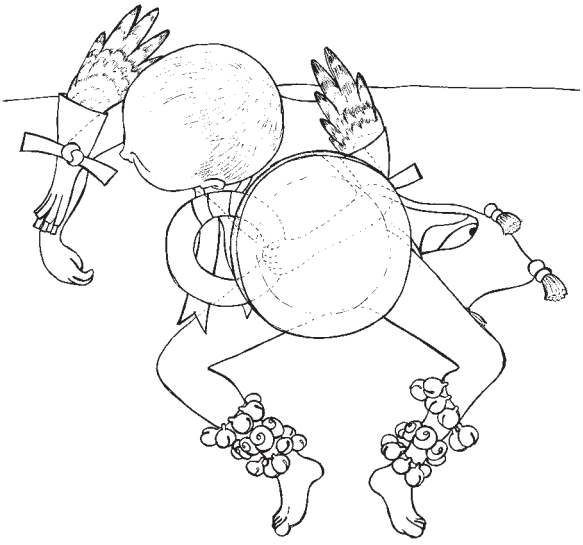

Figure 3.6.
Reconstruction of offering 111 at the moment when the body of a child was inhumed. Templo Mayor, Mexico Tenochtitlan. Drawing by María Gabriela Guevara Sánchez, after original by Grégory Pereira.

that almost all the children sacrificed were locals of noble lineage, offered by their own parents, and that sacrificial death constituted a glorious end.

An excavation in 2005 in the Templo Mayor uncovered the skeleton of a five-year-old child sacrificed in the middle of the fifteenth century (figure 3.6), with the wings of a sparrow hawk, whose tiny heart had been extracted and who had shells around his ankles (see López Luján et al., 2010, p. 388, figure 15), which is precisely what Bernardino de Sahagún's text documents about one of the slaves sacrificed by cardiectomy in honor of Huitzilopochtli.

According to Sahagún (2000, Vol. 2, pp. 834–835),

> *En las gargantas de los pies unos caracolitos mariscos injeridos en unas tiras de cuero tigres, como calzuelas, los cuales caracolillos colgaban de las calzuelas . . . En los hombros unas alas de cavilanes que llamaban tlóhmaitl, Estaban las alas revueltas con papel los cabos dellas, y asidas a la xaqueta. Estaba pintado aquel papel de diversos colores entrepuestas, colorado y negro, revuelto con marcaxita*
>
> [Between (the victim's) ankles (they put) small shellfish shells inserted into straps made of jaguar skin, used as hose, and the shells hung from the hose. . . . From the shoulders, wings of sparrow hawks which they called *tlohmaitl*. The tips of the wings were wrapped with paper and tied to the jacket. This paper was painted with many interposing colors, red and black, sprinkled with marcasite].

The archaeological corroboration of the report by Friar Bernardino de Sahagún is remarkable.

CONCLUSION

Human sacrifice has always been a fundamental marker of religious alterity. The Greco-Latin sources considered human sacrifice to be *xénos* and *ánomos* to their own culture and therefore rejected it in space, as an essential mark of barbarity and a "savage mirror on the edge of the known world" (Taussig, 1993, pp. 78–79), as well as in time, as a cruel time with cruel practices, now transcended by historical time. In both cases, however, a critical analysis of the literary sources and, above all, contrasting them with information from archaeology allows us to question—to at least some degree—this holistic construction of radical inversion between civilized and barbarian poles.

Christian authors chose not to understand human sacrifice as a cultural difference or an example of the moral depravity of tyrant or conspirator, instead converting it into the mainstay of "pagan" religious practices. The parricide and fratricide of their demonized gods became the explanatory paradigm of their adherents' heinous rituals, and the secretive character of those practices—already associated with peoples like the Jews—was extended to Christian denominations themselves considered heterodox, in step with the growing importance of the private sphere as ritual space in late antiquity.

These characterizations of others' religions by those who depicted barbarians or pagans in antiquity would be reiterated in the images portrayed by evangelizing Christians of the religious practices of indigenous Mesoamericans, with child sacrifice, cannibalism, and sexual degeneracy comprising significant components. Archaeology certainly confirms differences in ritual praxis between the ancient world and Mesoamerica: human sacrifice had a structural nature in precolonial Mesoamerica in contrast with its elusiveness in the archaeological record of the Greco-Roman world and its manifestation in myth and iconography. But analysis of certain emic elements, both in the Mesoamerican indigenous world as well as in the Greco-Latin and early Christian ones, suggests the existence of some shared semantic—and potentially embarrassing—spaces. This occurs in the conceptualization of human (self) sacrifice as a gateway to a higher reality and a route to renewing cosmic energies, in the concomitances in rituals of symbolic theophagy, and in the treatment of the relics of Christian martyrs and some Mesoamerican sacrificial victims.

NOTES

1. See the following studies: Bonnechere & Gargné, 2013; Bremmer, 2007; Ferrara, 2016; Meszaros & Zachhuber, 2013; Nagy & Prescendi, 2013; Prescendi, 2015; Weiler, 2007.

2. Human sacrifice is often a response to a situation of anxiety. Fear has been a constant in the human species and in history, and *safety* has always been a precarious construction: see Delumeau, 1989. On fear as the glue of social cohesion, see Mongardini, 2007. See also Laffan & Weiss, 2012; Newman, 2000.

3. See Botta and Olivier, in this volume.

4. On human sacrifice in Greece, see Bonnechere, 1994, 1998; Bremmer, 2007; Burkert, 1983; Georgoudi, 1999; Hughes, 1991. In 2016 a team of Greek and American archaeologists found, alongside many bones of sacrificed animals, the tomb of an adolescent near the summit of Mount Lykaion in Arcadia, location of the famous sanctuary of Zeus in which, according to the ancient sources, human sacrifices took place. The remains date to the eleventh century BCE (see the reports published in *Archaeology: A Publication of the Archaeological Institute of America*, November–December 2016 and January–February 2018) and present the possibility of a ritual sacrifice. The evidence discovered in Anemospilia (Archances, Crete) is older, datable to the seventeenth century BCE. (Andreadaki-Vlazaki, 2015, pp. 35–36).

5. There are, however, other references concerning the practice of human sacrifice by the Greeks, and not all of them appear to be purely mythical. According to Phylarcus, it was a common practice for all the Greeks to kill human beings before setting out against the enemy (Porph. *Abst*. 2.56.7: Phylarchus; *FGrH* 81F 80). A well-known case is that of the three young captives brought to Themistocles before the Battle of Salamis in 480 BCE (Plut. *Them*. 13.2–5). The victims, said to be the Persian king's nephews, would have been offered to Dionysus Omestes (Raw Eater). This context of extreme anxiety and fear could explain the recourse to an extraordinary measure like this. For the diverse interpretations of this and other cases of human sacrifice in times of war, see Bonnechere, 1994, especially pp. 113–114, note 133.

6. Iohannes Malalas refers to the sacrifice of virgins at the foundation of Alexandria in 332 BCE and in that of Antioch in 300 BCE (Malalas 8.1, 13). The cranium of a girl found in the Mycenean palace of Kasteli (at Kydonia, now the site of the modern city of Chania in Crete), datable to the early eighth century, could be associated with a possible human sacrifice (Andreadaki-Vlazaki, 2015; see especially pp. 36–42).

7. Even in Diocletian's time a human sacrifice is documented in the army, in the legend of Saint Dasius, in the context of the festival of Cronos in Durostorum, according to the *Acta Dasii* 3 (Cumont, 1897).

8. On the origin and interpretations of the term *paganism*, see Bettini, 2014, appendix 2.

9. On cannibalism in Greco-Roman literary sources, see Sanz, 2018.

10. "In setting boundaries between the legitimate and the illegitimate, between 'us' and 'them,' the Roman elite identified a series of transgressive religious stereotypes (from horrendous witches to monstrous Christians), against whom they waged war, with the stylus and the sword" (Beard, North, & Price, 1998, Vol. 1, p. 212).

11. This term designated necropolitan areas with charred infant remains in urns, from Carthage and other western Mediterranean cities like Motya, Tharros, and Hadrumentum. The matter of the rituals implied in tophets has been extensively discussed by other authors. See D'Andrea, 2018, pp. 127–130; Ribichini, 2017; Xella, 2014.

12. On the Devil and idolatry, see also Taviani and Devecka, in this volume.

13. For a quotation of the comparison between the Greco-Roman gods and those of the Aztecs, see Botta, in this volume.

14. See Baudez, 2012; Carrasco, 2000; Duverger, 1979; González Torres, 2003; Matos Moctezuma, 2005; Pastor, 2004; Peperstraete, 2012; Read, 1998; Rival, 2013; Winkelman, 1998.

15. On human sacrifice in the *Huamantla Map*, see Wright-Carr, in this volume.

16. See Chávez Balderas, 2010; Graulich, 2005; López Luján & Olivier, 2010; Wade, 2018.

17. For a comparison between the solar god in the ancient Mediterranean and in Mesoamerica, see Pérez Yarza, in this volume.

18. A recent doctoral thesis has also emphasized, from a biopsychosocial perspective, how—like gladiator shows in Rome—public ceremonies of human sacrifice were spectacles in which, "as participants in this grand ceremonial program, [the Mexica's] bodies were receiving an influx of pleasurable neurochemicals, and the sense of security they felt was anxiety remediation related to witnessing violence performed against outsiders. They were cognitively aware, though, that they indeed belonged to a supreme civilization with the most powerful gods watching over them as they continued to feed these divine beings with the blood of their enemies" (Hansen, 2017, p. 323).

19. For this reason, the terminological analogy between sacrifice and war, conceptualized as an alimentary offering to Sun and Earth, is accompanied by another term for blood sacrifice, *nextlāhualli*, the "payment of a debt" (Duverger, 1979; Olivier, 2016). For a pictorial representation of the myth of birth of the Fifth Sun in the primordial bonfire at Teotihuacan, in a late sixteenth-century cartographic and historical manuscript, see Wright-Carr, in this volume.

20. On the inauguration of the main temple in Mexico in 1487, with numbers of sacrificed victims between 20,000 and 80,400 war prisoners, according to the sources, see Graulich, 1991.

21. On the continuity from the Aztec *tzompantli* to the gallows and pillory as a means of punishment employed by Spaniards, see Carreón Blaine, 2006.

22. On the different attitudes before sacrifice, see Olivier, 2003, pp. 209–211.

23. See note 22.

24. The chronicler Juan de Villagutierre relates how in 1624 the Maya surprised the Spaniards when they attended a mass in Zaclun. After extracting the heart, some bodies were nailed to a stake at a crossroads, considered a symbol of the center of the universe (Nájera Coronado, 2003, p. 67).

25. According to the Legend of the Suns (1558), Quetzalcoatl descended to the underworld (Mictlan) and then returned to the Earth with the bones and ashes of the giants who had died in earlier times, which were ground as if maize. Then Quetzalcoatl and other gods performed self-sacrifice by extracting blood from their penis or tongue and sprinkling it on this dough, from which humans were shaped (Olivier, 2016, p. 220). The Latin translation of the Nahuatl text of the *Códice Chimalpopoca* (*Anales de Cuauhtitlan* and *Leyenda de los Soles*) states that: "*Quo cum venisset, dea nomine Quilaztli, id est Cihuacoatl, os contrivit, tum deposuit in Chachiuhapazco, dein Quetzalcohuatl sanguinem extravit de pene suo*" [When he (Quetzalcoatl) arrived there, the goddess Quilaztli (this is Cihuacoatl) lacquered his face, and then he poured [his blood] into a basin, and then Quetzalcoatl sprinkled the blood of his penis] (Lehmann, 1906, p. 253).

26. On cannibalism, see Taviani, in this volume.

27. See Botta and Olivier, in this volume.

28. See Taviani, in this volume.

29. "So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him'" (John 6:53–56, English Standard Version). "And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body'" (Mark 14:22; see also Matthew 26:26–28).

30. Among the Lele people of the Congo, "a hybrid monster, which in secular life one would expect them to abhor, is reverently eaten by initiates and taken to be the most powerful source of fertility. At this point one sees that this is, after all, to continue the gardening metaphor, a composting religion. That which is rejected is ploughed back for a renewal of life" (Douglas, 1966/2002, p. 161). Eagleton (2018), elaborating on these ideas, comments on Christian theophagy: "The Eucharist is a love feast, but one based on the symbolic consuming of a polluted body. It is an act of solidarity established by participating in the passage of a destitute creature from failure to flourishing" (p. 153).

31. Olivier (2010, pp. 466–469) has underlined the process of identification both between the warriors and their captives and between the hunters and the deer they

hunted, based on the prohibition of consuming their animal or human prey. On the other hand, the Aztecs acquired their definitive name of "Mexica" following the mythical sacrifice of the Mimixcoa and, as Mexica, were given the cosmic duty to feed the "world machine" with sacrificial victims (Olivier, 2016, p. 228). Likewise, the future Mexica king (*tlahtoāni*) died symbolically through three ritual acts: the seclusion and descent into the underworld, the piercing of the nasal septum (which transformed him into a potential sacrificial victim) and, finally, the real sacrifice of the first captive of the king, with whom the sovereign identified. In all these processes, identity determination is closely linked to human sacrifice (Olivier, 2010, pp. 462–464, 469).

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4

The Aztec Sun and Its Mesoamerican Milieu from a Classical Mediterranean Perspective

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Solar deities unfold in a multifaceted and changing religious world where notable differences regarding a single god may be seen. Such is the case of Quetzalcoatl who, for example, has notable differences in Cholula as opposed to in Mexico Tenochtitlan (Britenham, 2017). Despite this, the Sun's uniqueness provided a fixed reference point that was bestowed with common elements in each cultural framework, allowing us to discern patterns of evolution in pre-Christian imperial societies, rather than the factual juxtapositions against which Frankfurter warned (2012, p. 87). Such comparisons can explain the processes of Christianization and cultural fusion that, with deep repercussions, took place after the arrival of the Spaniards in Mesoamerica, via a middle ground (Woolf, in this volume) in which the Sun was a crucial element.

One case in point is the incorporation of European motifs in Indian cosmography (Díaz Álvarez, 2009; Nielsen & Reunert, 2009). The exchange is not, however, limited to images. Both the extended symbolism of Helios-Sol in late antiquity, used even in synagogues (Magness, 2005; Olszewski, 2005), as well as the enlightened ideas that appear in Christian tradition, allowed for an understanding of native cultures. After all, examples of European mentality such as the book *Utopia* by Thomas More, first published in 1516, show a conceptual proximity between the Sun and the Christian divinity (Gleason, 1965). Thanks to this coincidence, the classical figure of the Sun was restored

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c004

to be used as a tool of evangelization, affecting the folk culture and art of New Spain. The proximity of Helios-Sol and Christ allowed for the use of native solar tradition as a means of acculturation oriented toward Christian and classical imagery. While this is interesting, it is a field that specialists have looked at from various perspectives (Alcántara Rojas, 2009; Burkhart, 1988; Lara, 1999; Stresser-Péan, 2005). On the other hand, the comparison of the Mediterranean and Mesoamerican worlds in the early stages of their respective processes of Christianization allows us to better understand these phenomena of religious acculturation.

For the Mesoamerican world, in many cases we do not have true firsthand knowledge, but rather material remains and indirect references. Some of these indirect sources of historical narrative, like the *Codex Xolotl*, were already questioned many years ago, after contradictions and influences of later folklore were noticed (Calnek, 1973). This form of research thus carries the risk that sources may be clouded by an external agent's vision. According to Botta (2009, p. 175), "throughout the first colonial history, a collective process guided by mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians) contributed to an image of pre-Hispanic religious systems clearly inspired by the interpretive models that Western thought had inherited."

General European worldview did not only determine the understanding of the New World, but also particularly impacted religious and philosophical education of the many members of the clergy writing in America. In 1538 Francisco de Vitoria (2008, p. 204) compared Muslim and indigenous American conversion with phrases such as "*Non enim esset tolerabilis lex si statim faceret edictum ut sub poena capitis nullus coloret Mahumetum vel etiam idola, vel ut coloret Christum*" [Indeed, a law would not be tolerable if he (the prince) suddenly made an edict so that, under capital punishment, no one would worship Muhammad or even the idols, or that everyone would worship Christ]. It is a well-known subject that was addressed by Antonio Garrido Aranda (1980), but which Byron E. Hamann (2010, p. 154) has spelled out, accepting the importance of the Iberian past as a determining factor in the perception of Americans. To this we can add the missionaries' vision of the Mesoamerican religious panorama, the simplification of which historians like Sergio Botta (2004, pp. 91–92) have warned us about. Foreign observers rationalize what they see through their own experience and cultural milieu,[1] choosing some elements of the dominant local cosmology—that of the Aztecs—as a reference.

Works originating in New Spain from the sixteenth century onward are the main source of religious knowledge in Mesoamerica. They set down

earlier cultural traditions in writing, usually very much influenced by the Mexica legacy and, as a result, blurring pre-Columbian religious diversity. Some documents deserve special mention, such as Friar Francisco Ximénez's *Popol Vuh* [Book of Counsel or Book of the People]—a work with religious content especially devoted to a specific sixteenth-century region (López, 2009, 2012).

CULTURAL CONTACT AND TRANSMISSION

It is risky to contend a priori that heterogeneous groups—ethnically, linguistically, and politically separate (like the Mixtec and Tarascans)—would have a common ancestral religious core. Continued contact over centuries builds bridges, and certain deities end up being shared by various peoples, each of whom provide their own features. This local reaction takes place when a cultural model is imposed—by force or prestige—in a geographic area. This seems to be the case of central Mexico when the Spaniards arrived: there was a convergence between local traditions, sheltered by a common political framework (the Aztec Empire) and a dominant culture (Mexica). Within these criteria, there is an interesting deity that expands along with the dominant group: Huitzilopochtli, the native Mexica Sun god. He is not the only regional solar divinity; he is not even the only Sun in local cosmology. That said, it is interesting to draw a series of comparative lines between this system and Sol's situation in the Roman Empire during the transition out of late antiquity. In the imperial Mediterranean, the figure of Sol and solar elements became very common across the Empire. There is currently a debate among those that see a god foreign to the Roman world but incorporated into the imperial religious system, versus those that support the evolution of the "native" republican Sol, finding points of common expression with other places in the Mediterranean milieu and building conceptual bridges (onomastics, epigraphy) and artistic ones (in the predominant Hellenistic-Roman iconographic system) (Hijmans, 2009, pp. 1–30; among others).

What is evident in the Mesoamerican cultural framework, beyond whatever level of consistency that one might envision, is a similarity in stylistic and cultic features across a large part of the territory. Some perspectives argue that there is a cultural uniformity at a level comparable to the classical Mediterranean era, sharing places of worship, mythemes, and cosmogony. Aztecs and Texcocans assimilated Toltec institutions, adapting them to their needs, and León-Portilla (1967, p. 42) early on defended the survival of Chichimec elements in the Mexica world. Tenayuca with the Chichimecs

and Mexico Tenochtitlan with the Aztecs are good examples of this cultural fusion, where the newly settled peoples adapt customs from their environment (Morante López, 1997, pp. 118–123). The Aztec Triple Alliance [*ēxcān tlahtōlōyan*] symbolically exemplifies this cultural integration: the Mexica were heir to the Toltecs (through the Culhuas), Texcoco was heir to the historic Chichimecs, and Tlacopan was heir to Azcapotzalco (Hernández et al., 2007, p. 47). However, the Mesoamerican region lacked lasting political unity. One moment when this was almost achieved was that of the Triple Alliance, but even so, they had reached this dominance, in some regions, just decades before the Europeans' arrival (as in the case of Oaxaca, conquered in the second half of the fifteenth century).

Although some research points to a degree of population replacement in central Mexico from the Classic to the Postclassic periods (Hernández et al., 2007), there is a clear cultural continuity that is also manifest in religion. Florescano (1993) and López Austin (1994) defined a series of common characteristics in Mesoamerican worldview shared by certain distinct traditions. Before them, Nicholson (1971, pp. 395–446) had already tried to explain the Mesoamerican system's complexity as involving a large grouping of deities arranged through worship, an explanation which even today is practical (Botta, 2004, p. 100). This vision is rounded out by scholars like León-Portilla (1967) who recognize a cultural and religious syncretism during Mexica domination. The Mesoamerican cultural framework encompasses a heterogeneous but united worldview, which does not radically unify thought but allows contrary currents within it (López Austin, 2008: 83).

In the same way that there is cultural contact without political unity in Mesoamerica, we can understand the cultural transmission between the Persian and Greco-Roman areas of influence in the ancient world, where some religious movements like Christianity were shared. Roman sources also tend to see similarity, as between the solar cult of Aurelian (270–275 CE) and that practiced in Persia (SHA *Aurel.* 5.5), although these should not be considered as genuine equivalencies (Adrych et al., 2017, p. 4).

RELIGIOUS ADAPTATION AND THE *INTERPRETATIO* PROBLEM

The Mediterranean area reached a high level of eclecticism during the Hellenistic and imperial Roman periods, creating the cultural framework for a common religious system. An example would be Isis; spread over the Mediterranean during the Hellenistic period, she became a common deity during the Empire. But it would be a mistake to understand this Roman imperial

Isis as part of the original Egyptian religious system, since she belonged to the imperial Roman world (Alvar Ezquerra, 2008, pp. 3, 10, 14). As for Sol, during the second and fourth centuries CE the solar image was associated with many gods (Ferguson, 1970, p. 219). By then, its iconography stemmed from an authoritative stylistic pattern (Hellenistic), to which an official form of cult defining Sol was added in the third century, a moment when it came to have a predominant role, during the reigns of Heliogabalus (Elagabalus) and Aurelian (Sol Invictus).

While Sol Invictus, "Invincible Sun," was a nonlocal solar dedication, the Elagabalus deity was a local god of the Syrian city of Emesa that was assimilated to Sol. There are other examples that interact with the solar image, such as Mên (god of the half-moon) and Atis, who are together solarized, belatedly, by their celestial relationship (Turcan, 2001, pp. 71, 74). Syria was, however, the most prolific region, with other examples such as Baal of Baalbek, a celestial god represented occasionally as Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus (Bêl's solar messenger), as well as Yarhibôl and Aglibôl (Sun and Moon) from Palmyra; as well as Shamash in some Syrian cities. Eastern Mediterranean gods established in Syria and Palestine owed their uniqueness partly to the Arab world, whose princely elites settled the Syrio-Palestine world in Emesa, Edessa, Palmyra, and Petra (Seyrig, 1971; Turcan, 2001, p. 179; Watson, 1999, pp. 195–196).

This local adaptive response to, and dialogue with, the dominant culture could manifest itself in various modes of equivalence. The term *interpretatio* is used to understand this process in the Mediterranean world. The word has its origins in its use by Tacitus in a very specific context (Tac. *Germ*. 43.4), but it has been extended as a historical concept to explain the Greek and Roman sources that were very prolific in interpreting alien deities within their own mindset (Colin, Huck, & Vanséveren, 2015; Marco Simón, 2012). Nevertheless, this is a two-way phenomenon. For instance, indirect references in epigraphic or iconographic testimonies provide a glimpse of the local adaptation of Greco-Roman divine names and cults in the Celtic world (Häeussler, 2012; Marco Simón, 2010).

Interpretatio is important because it brings together different types of local variations of the same god, responding to local views of the cultural dimension of prestige. This phenomenon also has a parallel model in Mesoamerica, in which the unifying roles of Tonantzin and Tlaloc stand out. In this context of religious encounter, the Sun participates in two major processes: the religious acculturation of Mexica power, with Huitzilopochtli and the cosmogonic suns, and the Hispano-Christian religious acculturation that uses Sol's

figure because of its conceptual proximity to Christianity (Lara, 1999). In the ancient Mediterranean world, various Baals from the eastern Mediterranean, as well as Egyptian syncretic deities like Serapis, used Helios-Sol as a vehicle of religious expression during the Roman Empire. It was not the expansion of a native idea of the Roman deity Sol, but rather the projection of local traditions within a Hellenistic and imperial Roman religious system. Would it be possible to consider a similar process in central Mexico?

We certainly know of complex deities like Tlaloc who hide varied nuances and assimilate gods (Botta, 2004, 2009). In other cases, some divine names seem to be polysemic or to assimilate various gods. This is the case with Tonantzin, "Our Mother," a generic term that refers to Coatlicue, Cihuacoatl, or Teteo Inan, revealing the richness of Mesoamerican heterogeneity (González Torres & Ruiz Guadalajara, 1995, pp. 165–179; Solares, 2007, pp. 347–350, 391–398).

Mesoamerica's difference in regard to the idea of the Sun as a deity, in comparison to the Roman Empire, is that Huitzilopochtli seems not to participate in this process. Moreover, the absence of an enduring prestige-regulating element tied to the existence of diverse groups—such as the Tarascans, Nahua, Otomi, Matlatzinca, Mixtec, or Chichimec—creates a different context. These peoples developed important political entities independent from the Triple Alliance, such as the Tarascan Empire, the Tlaxcalan confederacy, and the Mixtec kingdoms. This ethnic, linguistic, and political heterogeneity must be considered to understand the multilingual Mesoamerican cultural framework (Wright-Carr, 2017, p. 180). However, linguistic and ethnic diversity was also present in the Mediterranean (Libio-Phoenicians, Syriacs, Copts, Gauls, Illyrians, etc.); therefore, the main difference lies in the intensity, duration, and extension of the political unit under a dominant entity or culture. In fact, López Austin defends the existence of a resilient Mesoamerican religious nucleus, but accepts the discrepancies that can be found within its transmission in Spanish times due to the variety of believers and the absence of a central authority (López Austin, 2016, p. 121). Colonial period sources—including Sahagún (*Florentine Codex*), Torquemada (*Monarquía Indiana* [Indian Monarchy]), and the *Codex Vaticanus A*—tell us about these differences in the representation of the cosmos, placing different gods in different places, even lacking a consensus on the number of heavens (twelve or thirteen) (compare López Austin, 2016, pp. 120–123). However, this information should be taken with caution. We have just spoken of the role of Spanish transmitters and, in the specific case of the *Codex Vaticanus A*, there have been calls to reconsider the influence of European mentality (Carrasco, 1982, pp. 11–12; Díaz Álvarez, 2009).

THE SCANT MYTHOLOGIZATION OF HELIOS-SOL

In contrast to the New World and many other cultures, Greek religious tradition gives little prominence to the Sun, Helios. He is more of a Titan than a god, as he is the son of Hyperion and Theia (Hom. *Od.* 12.175, Hes. *Theog.* 371). He was certainly mentioned in prayers and in mythology, but he was a minor deity. This is not unusual; although mythology includes the divinization of celestial bodies, there was not a significant cult to them in Greek tradition. Only the myth of Phaethon was widely known, and there were not widespread areas of worship, with the exception of Rhodes (Ferguson, 1970, pp. 44–45).

The role of Helios was partially taken over by Phoebus Apollo (Bright Apollo), the first solar assimilation in the Greek world. Both deities were closely linked. Among the first examples of this relationship, we have Pindar singing a paean to Apollo, addressing him as "solar ray" (Pind. *Pae.* 9). From the classical period on, this special relationship continued throughout Greek history, subsequently bequeathing the Roman world with the divine association of Sol-Apollo in an uninterrupted continuum (e.g., Zos., 2.6, 15–20).

One of the fields where Helios-Sol had some weight is in the definition of the cosmos. Helios-Sol and Selene-Moon form a key iconographic type as a cosmic metaphor, used extensively on reliefs and coins during the Roman Empire (Vermaseren, 1956–1960, Vol. 1, pp. 1292–1293). This is an important but secondary cosmological image, related to the zodiac and the main deity, as the coinage of Perinthus shows.[2] The Sun only had a central role in cosmological representations on a few occasions, notably in late antiquity, as in the Roman mosaic from the villa of Münster-Sarmsheim (third century, Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum) and the mosaic of Hammat Tiberias Synagogue, from 364–365 CE (Olszewski, 2005, p. 18), among others, where Helios-Sol is the main element in the context of the zodiac cycle (Magness, 2005, p. 5).

THE SUN AND HUITZILOPOCHTLI'S INCLUSION IN THE IMPERIAL WORLDVIEW

Mesoamerican worldview seems akin to some traits of Greco-Roman cosmological symbolism. In both systems, the Sun and the Moon mark the limit of our sphere's heaven—in stoic terms—but there are other dimensions. In Mesoamerica, however, the Sun has a doubly autonomous role, as a cosmogonic element (figure 4.1) and as a specific deity.[3]

Huitzilopochtli is the local god native to the Mexica group—the Aztecs from Aztlan—whose epicenter is Mexico Tenochtitlan. Typically the principal

Figure 4.1. *The Aztec calendar stone, fifteenth–sixteenth centuries, in the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City. Modified image from "Monolith of the Stone of the Sun, also named Aztec calendar stone." Photograph by El Comandante. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monolito_de_la_Piedra_del_Sol.jpg*

deities of emerging powers travel with their worshippers and spread their cult beyond its original borders. This seems to be the case for the Mexica, who catapulted their deity to a high level of dispersion when the Aztec Empire expanded throughout Mesoamerica. Perhaps the Mexica religious-political case can be likened in some respects to the Mesopotamian model, where the city's god accompanied political power and restructured worldview (see Marduk, in the forward of the Code of Hammurabi). Despite this, it is possible to define some interesting common traits between the Mediterranean under Roman domination, with the god Sol, and the Mesoamerican region controlled by the Mexica, with the god Huitzilopochtli.

Sol, under the advocation of Sol Indiges [Native/Invoked Sun], was one of Rome's native gods. He had a feast on August 9 and a shrine on Quirinal Hill, according to the Amiternum calendar (*CIL* 9: 4142). This Roman Sol is from a preimperial phase and corresponds to the autochthonous Sol of Aeneas in Virgil, or the traditional agricultural god that Varro vindicates (Verg. *Aen*. 12.176, Varro *Ling*. 5.74, *Rust*. 1.1, 5). Just as Huitzilopochtli (as a native Aztec god) was integrated into a wider pantheon, the classical Mediterranean Sol did the same, but through its artistic representations.

There is no religious or cult imposition in the Mediterranean case, but there is a Hellenistic-Roman stylistic supremacy that imprints its character, and in some Mediterranean cults, various solar iconographic features as well. In the Celtic world, the Sun is a first-order element that is manifested in the traditional form of a solar wheel or swastika (Aldhouse-Green, 1989, p. 3). However, in Gaul we have the temple to Apollo Vindonnus at Essarois, whose facade has a solar representation of the deity in the Greco-Roman style (Espérandieu & Lantier, 1907, No. 3414.). This god is not Helios-Sol but a local representation of Vindonnus assimilated to Apollo with certain solar traits. The iconographic tools to represent the god were taken from the dominant cultural repertoire; therefore, the Essarois facade does represent the god Sol in a vocabulary common to the Mediterranean, although it may not mean the same as Varro's Sol.

Nevertheless, it is possible to understand distinct regional traditions with solar attributes underlying broader superstrata. In this context, there is an interesting parallel between the expansion of a predominant cultural form, that of Helios-Sol, and the cult of Huitzilopochtli: the development of a series of shared traits that are due both to regional cultural contact as well as to the fact that the Sun is a heavenly body common to human perception (Galindo Trejo, 2003, p. 16). Precisely this univocity has allowed occasional direct comparisons between both shores, such as the cosmic and solar iconography of Mithraism (of Greco-Roman origin) and the Chamula cultures pointed out by Rober Beck (2006, pp. 74–80). Even so, there is a series of notable differences. In the first place, it is not clear to what extent Huitzilopochtli's (solar) supremacy was imposed on Aztec-dominated territories (Batalla, de Rojas, & Garandilla, 2008, p. 153), while in the Roman Mediterranean the main deity of reference was Jupiter, a nonsolar god.

One cannot compare the Sun's importance in the American world with that of the Mediterranean cultures, where cults of a solar nature only stand out in the Egyptian world, with deities such as Amun-Ra. Nevertheless, recent studies have revalued the importance of the appearance of certain solarized local expressions throughout the Roman Empire, such as the case of the Danubian

area (Szabó, 2017, p. 76). Comparable with this, we have diverse indications of the Sun's importance in Mesoamerican religion. In his *Apologética Histórica Sumaria* [Apologetic Summary History], Bartolomé de Las Casas (1967, p. 658) aims to explain central Mexican and Guatemalan worldviews. In his explanation, the author contends that all peoples have the Sun as their main deity. We also have archaeological examples, such as the great Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan (begun approximately in the first century CE), an obvious example of the heavenly body's importance (Márquez Sandoval, 2016). This temple can be related to the Templo Mayor, the Great Temple of Mexico Tenochtitlan, in its solar dedication, as the latter structure is doubly dedicated to Huitzilopochtli-Sun and to the ancient rain god Tlaloc.

What can be compared is the emergence of points of correspondence; the "middle ground" discussed by Woolf in the first chapter of this volume applies to different religious situations. Thus, the *interpretatio* and multiple denominations of gods show local reactions, while universal explanations appear on a more general and theoretical dimension. Along these lines, the evolution of Greco-Roman philosophy, as a response to increasing Mediterranean cultural exchange, makes sense. Examples are the neo-Platonic metaphysics in late antiquity, or the process of the "supralunar detachment" of the main gods subjected to an ulterior entity, very visible in the Stoics (Sen. *Ep*. 9.16, Origen *C. Cels*. 4.14).[4] Finally, one version of this process will culminate with Sol in the role of an ultimate deity in the Mediterranean-Roman pantheon during the fourth century, as shown by late authors like Macrobius (Macrob. *Sat*. 1.17–22).

In the American world, we find that certain characteristics of the worldview are widespread, such as the multiple levels of the cosmos-sky. The Nahua version, with thirteen levels, is known through concepts such as the *chicnāuhtopan*—the nine that are above us—that define the supralunar world (López Austin, 2016, p. 123). There is a similar scheme with an ultimate deity in the case of Ometeuctli and Omecihuatl, as told by the *tlamatinimeh* [polymath poet-philosophers]. According to León-Portilla's formulations (1999, p. 137; 2005, p. 161), the work of these *tlamatinimeh* reflects a Nahua philosophy with a theology centered on Ometeotl, god of duality.[5]

The duality defended by León-Portilla is not very far from the trinity of the Enneads by Plotinus—the One, the Intellect [*noûs*], and the Soul—or the similar Sun-based schematic concept from Julian the Apostate (Julian. *Or*. 4). Moreover, there is a similarity between the role Sol plays as a vehicle for communication among the various celestial strata in Neoplatonic philosophy (irradiation, enlightening of the *noûs*, Sol as a central element of the various divine hypostases, etc.) and the role of Topiltzin-Quetzalcoatl as an intermediate

element of duality, approved by it and moving amidst the multiple heavens (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 2, f. 124r–v [6.25]). This represents a similar way of thinking, explained by philosophical evolution in the Greco-Roman case, an intellectual answer to the encounter of diverse Mediterranean religious traditions following Hellenism. In both cases, the approach is a theorizing limited to the elite, which coexists with a general, varied polytheistic landscape. We can make out a process in Mexico similar to that of late pagan philosophy; we should ask, however, to what point is there an influence from Christian philosophy in the Spanish authors. Their theology was partly heir to Neoplatonism and was prone to reinterpret certain universal pagan beliefs in a monotheistic-henotheistic code, as Augustine did with the theology of ancient philosophy (August. *De civ. D.* 8.1, 9.23), and as Franciscans did through Augustine (Botta, in this volume).

Despite the problem of the sources, it is possible to identify certain changes brought about by the great empires. In the Roman Empire, Neoplatonic doctrine sought to explain the metaphysical through the exegesis of Plato's work. The superior *noûs*, Intelligence, is explained by way of light emanating from the One that enlightens the Soul (logos I and III of Plotinus's *Sixth Ennead*). Reality is explained in descending degrees from idea [*eîdos*] to the shadow-silhouette [*skiá*], with a strong dependency on luminous elements. From this way of thinking, the Neoplatonic world would take on religion, notably after Iamblichus.

In the Mexican case, the change is clear, with the incorporation of the Mexica god Huitzilopochtli, which is inserted in a larger, previously existing cosmology. Jacques Soustelle (1982, p. 50) speaks of an Aztec synthesis of older traditions of the Otomi, Huastec, or Yopi peoples. A general vision of the Mesoamerican panorama finds an assimilation of the older Toltec system in the Mexica tradition (León-Portilla, 2005, p. 161). Other authors, like Alfonso Caso (1953/1962, pp. 16–17), follow the same line of argument, claiming that the Aztecs adopted the gods of conquered peoples and preceding cultures into their pantheon. Caso also sees a dichotomy within religion, between the uneducated masses and the priests, where an exaggerated polytheistic vision was confronted by the centripetal priestly belief. An example of this is the priests' exclusive recognition of Ometochtli among the many gods of drunkenness (Caso, 1953/1962, pp. 17, 69). Huitzilopochtli is the only exception to this intentional syncretism, as a native Aztec god that was included in the main cosmological stories, yet while he was maintaining a possible two-level interpretation (Zantwijk, 2017). There are also authors who emphasize the Mesoamerican world's religious heterogeneity within a stylistic uniformity.

Michael E. Smith (2008, pp. 122, 130–135), for example, defends the religious autonomy of each *altepetl* (ethnic and territorial unit) in the Aztec Empire under the predominant style and architecture common to an Aztec cultural elite. If this is true, then the situation would not be far from that of the imperial Mediterranean under Greco-Roman cultural preeminence.

THE SUN AND HUITZILOPOCHTLI IN MESOAMERICA

In the Mexica's sphere of influence, there was an origin myth about the Sun with similar variants. It usually centered on the gods' sacrifice to recover the Sun after cycles of destruction in the myth of the four, and then five, Suns. It was a common cosmogenesis, promoted by the Mexica, which existed as an important part of Mesoamerican belief. The Mesoamerican and Greco-Roman worlds considered sacrifice as necessary for the gods' sustenance; in the New World, however, the considerations were different and transcendental. The value of human blood was such that it became an essential food for both the gods and the proper functioning of the world. The last Sun, that of the current era, needed blood to be able to move, a fact commemorated on the day Four Movement/Earthquake in the *tōnalpōhualli* religious calendar, the day of the birth and setting forth of this heavenly body (Caso, 1927, p. 88).

According to one of the variants, the Fifth Sun was born of the sacrifice of Nanahuatzin, a modest god who offered himself before the vain Teucciztecatl did (López Austin, 2009, p. 20). This second god, of male gender, gave rise to the Moon who, as in most religious pantheons, was intrinsically tied to the Sun; in the classical world we find the pairing between man (Helios-Sun) and woman (Selene-Moon). Also common across humanity is the relationship of these astral deities to the calendar. In Mesoamerica, the Moon (*Mētztli* in Nahuatl) named the month, in the same way that Luna appoints the Roman month or the Latin word *mensis* can be etymologically related to the Indo-European **méh₁n̥s* (Moon) (de Vaan, 2008, p. 373).

In any regard, we should not confuse the solar star per se, Tonatiuh (for the Maya *K'in*, lord Sun) with Huitzilopochtli, a solar god whose name means "Hummingbird on the Left." By the same token, neither should we confuse Metztli, the Moon god born of Teucciztecatl, with Coyolxauhqui, the Moon goddess, who in this case coincides with the gender of her Mediterranean counterpart. Despite this differentiation, Huitzilopochtli can be associated with Tonatiuh, since both represented the Sun. Tonatiuh was the physical solar deity that was born of Nanahuatzin's sacrifice and lived in the third heaven (*Codex Vaticanus A*).

This ambiguity of suns and moons can be explained by variations on the mythical tales of common Mesoamerican cosmology (López Austin, 2009, p. 18). The Sun god's theogony is not uniform, probably due to the fusion of traditions. Although the story of Huitzilopochtli's birth was reinterpreted by Spanish writers, the Huitzilopochtli-Nanahuatzin solar duality invites us to draw a parallel to Apollo and Helios. In contrast to the less important Helios, Huitzilopochtli was the main solar deity at the Spaniards' arrival, since he was the principal Aztec deity. This is why Bernardino de Sahagún devotes to this deity the first chapter, describing Aztec gods, of his *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España* [General History of the Things of New Spain] (1979, Vol. 1, f. 13r [1.1]). In line with the scholastic trend of comparison with the classic pantheon during the sixteenth century (see the chapter by Olivier, in this volume), Sahagún depicts Huitzilopochtli as a strong and bellicose Hercules, leaving out any mention of his solar aspect.[6] Huitzilopochtli's condition had a distinctly martial character that Apollo never had in the Greco-Roman world and that is found only slightly in Sol Invictus during the third and fourth centuries, when this deity became the Emperors' patron after Aurelian's reign (Watson, 1999, pp. 196–202). Warriors who died in battle and those sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli were taken to Tonatiuh Ichan [House of the Sun] so they could accompany him in a military procession during each day's morning. These soldiers would descend again, four years after passing certain tests, to enjoy a lifetime of delight as hummingbirds—note the connection to the name of the god (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 2, 144r–145r [6.29]).

There are other Mesoamerican myths about the Sun. The Aztec legend about the birth of the warrior Huitzilopochtli is another great account on the origins of the principal astral deities, also collected by Bernardino de Sahagún in his *General History* (1979, Vol. 1, ff. 202r–204v [3.1]). According to tradition, the god was born of Mother Earth Coatlicue [*Cōātl Īcue*, "she who wore a serpent skirt"]. He was begotten by the goddess brushing against a feathered ball, an asexual conception that outraged her other children: the Moon-Night Coyolxauhqui [the one adorned with bells] and her brothers the Centzon Huitznahua [southern stars], who tried to kill their mother before she gave birth. However, the Sun Huitzilopochtli was born already armed and on time to save his mother by defeating his brothers and dismembering Coyolxauhqui. Thus, Huitzilopochtli confirmed both his cosmic role as an adversary of night and darkness as well as a victorious warrior god. An example of this myth's importance can be found in the disk depicting a dismembered Coyolxauhqui that was found during an underground electrical installation in 1978, in one of the intermediate building stages of Mexico Tenochtitlan's Templo Mayor.[7]

Later sources are a problem for accessing pre-Columbian mythology. At best, the compilations from Spanish authors like Bernardino de Sahagún reflect the later state of Aztec or Nahua religious thought and do not extend to all of Mesoamerica nor to the pre-Mexica era. Sources are likely to mythologize this vision of the past (see Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 1, ff. 47v–48r [1: appendix]) and can hide details of a native religious evolution in favor of certain discursive strategies. For example, note how there is a memory of the Toltecs of Tula throughout the work of Diego Durán and how he makes a special link between them and Topiltzin (Durán, 1967). Add to memory's fragility the setback from dismantling the native priestly elite and their traditional religious culture, which is interpreted and "rationalized" by the final compiler, usually a Spaniard.

A good example of this rationalization and compilation can be found in chapter 11 of *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus Pinturas* [History of the Mexicans through Their Paintings]. There is found, in the Mexica's wanderings toward the future Mexico Tenochtitlan, the myth of Huitzilopochtli's birth from a woman "*que se decía Coatlicue, seyendo virgen, tomó vnas pocas de plumas blancas e púsolas en su pecho, y empreñóse sin ayuntamiento de varón*" [who was called Coatlicue, being a virgin, took a few white feathers and put them in her bosom and was pregnant with a son without union with a man]. She also bore the four hundred men that Tezcatlipoca made and that were killed by Huitzilopochtli (Garibay K., 1973, p. 43). This is nothing but an adapted myth of the goddess Coatlicue and her solar son defending her from the lunar daughter Coyolxauhqui and the Centzon Huitznahua. This work fuses various myths to create a more or less homogeneous story, a latent example of how the author is interpreting the information received. After the passages quoted as an example, he continues:

> *Y a estos cuatrocientos que mató Huitzilopochtli los habitadores de la provincia de Cuzco [*sic*] los quemaron y los tomaron por sus dioses, y fasta agora por tales los tenían, y en este cerro celebraban la primera fiesta del nacimiento de Huitzilopochtli y de los cuatrocientos que mató*
>
> [Of these four hundred killed by Huitzilopochtli, the inhabitants of the Cuzco (*sic*) province were burned and taken by their gods, and up until now they had them as such; and in this mountain they celebrated the first feast of Huitzilopochtli's birth and of the four hundred men that he killed]. (Garibay K., 1973, p. 44)

There are already studies on the differences between sources, such as the analysis by Mercedes de la Garza Camino (1983) of the *Historia de los Mexicanos*

por sus Pinturas [History of the Mexicans through Their Paintings] and the *Leyenda de los Soles* [Legend of the Suns]. The Sun in Mesoamerica is not just Huitzilopochtli; he is one of several solar deities that, generally speaking, have great importance in explaining the history of the cosmos. In the Mesoamerican tradition there had been four earths, structured around four previous suns and a current Fifth Sun (figure 4.1). This loss of past celestial bodies with each successive disaster is essential to the mythological explanations surrounding the Fifth Sun and, to a lesser extent, concerning Metztli (Moon), born after Tonatiuh (Sun). It is a cyclic vision of eras represented by the rivalry between Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca (Huitzilopochtli in the *General History*) that ends with the Fifth Sun. This case is a good example of how Mesoamerican worldview evolved, impacted by the incorporation of Huitzilopochtli.

Graulich (1997, p. 139) explained changes in the story of the five Suns as Chichimec and Aztec innovations. These two groups settled in the region later and added one more Sun as well as a new order of cosmic stages. This organization of eras has some resemblance to the Hesiodic ages (Hes. *Theog*. 109–200), because in each age there was a different human race that disappeared in a final destruction. However, while in Hellenic tradition there is a regression, Mesoamerican traditions show a notable progression in the *Leyenda de los Soles* (*Codex Chimalpopoca*). This tradition was driven by the Aztecs, with peculiar characteristics: a catastrophic vision in which our Fifth Sun will succumb, beginning a final cataclysm including humanity's destruction—a disaster that could be delayed through the ritual complex of human sacrifice guaranteed by Mexica domination (Tiesler & Olivier, 2020).

THE SOLAR DEITY AND THE RULER

The Aztecs placed special emphasis on this religious belief through their worship of Huitzilopochtli, with the Mexica state guaranteeing its compliance. Thus, the Sun's importance and the completion of bloody rituals both guaranteed the preservation of the cosmos and gave legitimacy to Mexico Tenochtitlan's supremacy. When we talk about the relationship between state and god, the image of the sculpture called the Teocalli of the Sacred War, which was perhaps used as a royal *icpalli* [seat or throne], easily comes to mind (Caso, 1927). Without a doubt, part of the Mexica worldview is embodied in its reliefs. The front represents Huitzilopochtli at the solar disc's left while the *huēi tlahtoāni* [great ruler] Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin accompanies the Sun on the right. The relevance of the ruler, the Sun, and Huitzilopochtli—the three main actors—could not be clearer.

One could easily see this piece as an example of use of public propaganda, but researchers like Michel Graulich (1997) warn about misrepresenting the Mesoamerican context. Regardless of whether art is an element of legitimizing propaganda, this piece reflects a religious and ideological message. I find the author's proposal particularly thought-provoking, as he interprets the explanation of sacrifice and the myth of Huitzilopochtli against the four hundred *huitznahuah* as a reworking of prior myths (pp. 152–153), placing the Mexica scheme alongside Tlaloc in a central solar-chthonic duality. Both deities shared the Templo Mayor, and from there they sanctioned the legitimizing role of state, sacrifice, and sacred war in the Mexica worldview. The government's legitimacy through sacrifice had parallels with the Roman religious mentality that motivated certain imperial actions of authority, such as the edict of Emperor Decius (249 CE) to ensure traditional religion through public sacrifices (Rives, 1999; Mentxaka, 2014, p. 25). However, the route to solar-sacrificial legitimacy that we find in the Aztec Empire did not exist in the classical Mediterranean, although the use of solar iconography in Roman imperial ideology to reinforce the ruler has been studied for some time (Berrens, 2004, pp. 171–229; Chirassi Colombo, 1979, pp. 654–655).

Sol, as a deity protecting emperors, has a special relationship with the ruler and the state. From the perspective of classical studies, this relationship is similar to that observed in the aforementioned Teocalli of the Sacred War. In the Mediterranean world of the third century, Sol is linked to several emperors through coins with legends like *comes*, *aeternitas augusti*, *conservator augusti* (*RIC* 7: Ticinium 56, 5.1: Gallienus 160, 5.2: Probus 294). Some Severan rulers were even momentarily identified with Sol, as the empress was with Luna (*RIC* 4.1; SHA, *M. Ant.* 52–53), but solar promotion reaches an extreme during the Tetrarchy, when Serapis appears holding the head of Helios, during the reigns of Maximinus II (305–312), Licinius (308–324), and even Constantine (306–337).[8] The Genius Augusti also appears holding the head of Serapis in Alexandria (*RIC* 7: Alexandria 2–6; Alexandria 160a, 160b, and 161), while the mint in Antioch has the Genius holding the head of Helios (*RIC* 6: Antioch 164a–c and 165), reflecting a special bond of the two gods with the imperial numen and the legitimization of Licinius, Maximinus II, and Constantine.

Sol on third-century coinage appears to be increasingly linked to invincibility, with elements like the epithet *Invictus* or the representation of defeated enemies (*RIC* 5.1: Aurelian 61–66, 134–135, 137, 5.2: Treveri 116, Diocletian, and others). This is not always the case, however; many of the mintages have no military component. For example, there is no such element in the previously mentioned coins featuring Genius with the emperor and Serapis. Faced with

this, the warrior role of the Mesoamerican counterpart is key to understanding the Aztec afterlife.

EVOLUTION OF THE SOLAR FIGURE: FROM THE AGRARIAN CONNECTION TO THE IMPERIAL FRAMEWORK

According to Alfredo López Austin (2008, p. 51), Huitzilopochtli could have had, in his origin, the nature of an aquatic numen of agricultural societies. This would explain the god's connection to the aniconicity among peoples with a great wealth of representations of deities, and the close relationship with Tlaloc, the rain god. This situation is no less curious considering that similar studies have existed since the 1970s regarding the Palmyrene triad Bêl-Aglibôl-Iarhibôl and that of Bêl-Aglibôl-Malakbêl.

Aglibôl (lunar god) and Iarhibôl (solar god) had their own independent worship in Palmyra; it was not until an undetermined moment around the change of eras that these three deities became associated. According to Lucinda Dirven and other authors, this association took place as a result of modifications made to the Temple of Bêl (Dirven, 1999, pp. 56–57), or in the period around 33 BCE–32 CE (Seyrig, 1971, pp. 89–91; Teixidor, 1979, pp. 35–50). Although Iarhibôl had a previous relationship with the sovereign god Bêl, it was not initially so with Aglibôl, who was absent in the joint dedications of the other two gods in temples such as Dura-Europos. In contrast, Malakbêl—a notably solar god during the Empire (Carbó García, 2010, pp. 198–199)—might, in his origin, have been of a vegetable nature in various contexts. Malakbêl was worshipped along with Aglibôl in the *hieròn álsos*, "sacred grove" (or *gnt' 'lym*, "garden of the gods"), a shrine run by the Bene Komare (Dirven, 1999, pp. 160–161). Because of the shrine's partially Canaanite name, it was supposed to have been one of the oldest cultic elements in the city. Aglibôl later went on to become part of Bêl's triad, and both their temples went on to have a subordinate relationship with the god. But in Palmyra, Malakbêl was also related to Gad Taimi, with both being *synnaoí theoì* [cohabitant gods] of the temple of Atargatis, fertility goddess of the Bene Mita (Dirven, 1999, pp. 160–170). Overall, the globalizing Hellenistic process during the Empire gave these gods a solar nature, and they were already partially assimilated with Sol when they expanded from their homeland throughout the Empire.

There are many examples of this process of solarization. One has only to review Latin and Greek inscriptions in the western Roman Empire to see the expansion of syncretic deities, sharing a chronological and geographic space among them and with those gods that presented local forms as well (Gaul and

Italy). The way they were represented responds to Greco-Roman image patterns (*CIL* 6: 710, Latin-Palmyrene inscription), as do the coins. Some of them provide interesting examples of fusion under the Tetrarchy, adding attributes and diverse gods like Sol and Serapis (*RIC* 6: Nicomedia 73).

The level of assimilation varies greatly depending on the political context, such as the famous case of the Syrian emperor Elagabalus (218–222 CE) and the god with the same name from Emesa, where the future Emperor was high priest. His religious commitment is extremely well known in Roman historiography. For the comparison to America, it is interesting to observe how the emperor minted coins dedicated to the local deity in both the Roman fashion and in the traditional local manner (with eagle and *baetylus* [sacred stone]), but indistinctly called Sol.[9] This is one of the clearest examples of local religious response (Sol Elagabalus) to a global cultural phenomenon that can also be observed in some of the few coins minted by Macrinus in 217–218 CE, in which the eagle, an essential element of the Syrio-Phoenician celestial deities, is accompanied by the head of Helios. It is the head of Helios-Sol from an iconographic and Greco-Roman point of view, but Prieur and Prieur (2000, Nos. 976, 988, 1015) interpret this solar figure as Shamash, which these coins possibly reference. Both coins come from the Emesa mint, homeland of Elagabalus, so I think it is also possible to interpret this image as such. The only impediment to this is the monopoly on priesthood held by the family of Elagabalus, the future Emperor who would rise in arms against Macrinus in the year 218 CE.

The process of adapting the Greco-Roman Sol's symbolism in the Mediterranean world has a possible parallel with Huitzilopochtli's situation, but also with the Christian image of Jesus in the hands of Spanish missionaries. There are several authors that have dealt with the latter problem, such as Berenice Alcántara Rojas, who focuses on Mesoamerican *difrasismos*[10] that recover the luminous Christian figure with the goal of making metaphorical references that could explain divine concepts in a way understandable from the native viewpoint. In this particular context, biblical references of the "Sun of justice" (Malachi 4:2) or the "light of the world" (John 8:12) are used, and Francisco Plácito explained—within Christian doctrine—the resurrection of Jesus through a biblical solar metaphor of Sol coming out of darkness (Alcántara Rojas, 2009, p. 161). It is a fact that evangelizing elements like missions are a center for reinterpreting indigenous religion (Botta, 2004, p. 97).

Looking at the role of Sol as a missionary tool, the idea of this deity's use as a binder of pre-Christian memory has not received sufficient attention. In the late Roman world, after Christianity's official arrival, pagan authors

like Macrobius and philosophers like Proclus, and even the emperor Julianus, defended a supposedly traditional view of religion, the applications of which had already been deeply altered. The religious theology of Julianus (*Or.* 4) makes use of the Neoplatonic movement with strong religious impressions focused on the solar element. In the fifth century, the same philosophical movement encouraged Proclus to pick up and reinterpret traditional pre-Christian religious memory in works like *Elements of Theology*, *Homeric Hymns*, and *Hymn to Helios*. Half a century prior, in his *Saturnalia*, Macrobius also emphasized Sol's role as a common element of pagan deities. This is a distorted vision, in which we do not find classic religious approaches such as Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* or Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. The change may lie in the second- and third-century transformation, with the growing use of solar symbolism and of the polysemic figure of Sol Invictus, a common imperial dedication to the many local dedications to Sol across the Empire.

CONCLUSION

The Sun's distinct characteristics in each region could be influenced by the worshipers' customs and traditions where religious expression developed, but when a common cultural framework was imposed, they tended to end up responding to a common vocabulary. This is the case of the Roman imperial framework. The solar representations became so common in the Mediterranean framework that they were used even in synagogues like that of Hammat in Tiberias (fourth century). While in the (culturally) lax Latin or Greek circles the nimbus was constantly used as a symbol of solar luminosity, this was not the case in the representation of certain gods of Syrian origin. On one hand, Elagabalus seems to carry this element in his anthropomorphic representations; but, on the other hand, various gods like Aglibôl or Malakbêl could appear with him on occasion,[11] while other gods like Heliopolitan Jupiter only relate to the Sun by their names. The appearance of solar attributes to represent a god do not follow a geographic logic, as the relief from Serapis shows. This figurative representation of Serapis appears to make use of the nimbus only occasionally, in such disparate places as Gaul and Egypt (figure 4.2).

The figures reproduced in this chapter, together with other representations—such as the coin from Perinthus mentioned in note 2—are good examples of the Sun's comparison in Mesoamerica and in the classical Mediterranean. These images show the heavenly body's importance in both worldviews, but also show the distinct relevance it had in each framework. In the Mesoamerican world, plural suns are key, essential to explanation. In the Mediterranean

Figure 4.2. *Serapis bust on a basanite disc. 75–200 CE © The Trustees of the British Museum, museum number 1929,0419.1. Reprinted with permission of the British Museum, London. Retrieved from https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/314743001*

world, on the other hand, the Sun is a key element but in an auxiliary way. It is represented next to the Moon but, although Helios-Sol is the most important of the stars, it is not central to most of the representations but is rather an accessory to the main deity, such as Zeus-Jupiter.

The aesthetic and religious language is a form of communication that enables the transmission of religious feelings. We should ask ourselves up to what point were the shared characteristics, in the Mediterranean or in Mesoamerica respectively, merely an aesthetic resource and up to what point did they have a true symbolic value for their users. These are difficult issues; it would be worthwhile to take them into account when observing differences between the regional tendencies. Did the same symbols have the same value and importance among different groups? From the Mediterranean point of view, it seems like they did not have the same importance. The nimbus or radiant halo is an element that

characterizes solar or light gods in imperial Mediterranean circles, while chariot use remains much more related to Sol in the dominant Hellenistic-Latin circle (Pérez Yarza, 2017). The use of solar symbolism varies greatly among different areas like the Syrian, the Egyptian (Serapis), or the Latin (Sol). To some extent this has allowed for imperial interpretations, such as Sol Invictus as a sort of Empire-wide integrating proposal (Chenoll Alfaro, 1994). At any rate, Sol rests on cult elements that are originally distinct but are then inserted into the same imperial Mediterranean framework, employing a common vocabulary to express local sensitivity to distinct traditions.

The universal character of Sol makes it especially interesting. In this chapter we have decided to not delve deeply into the process of the evangelization of New Spain, because the role of Sol in this context has been thoroughly researched and is less useful for comparison with the classic Mediterranean world. The comparison of two deities in formation, Huitzilopochtli and Sol, seems more suggestive, as do the way in which their characteristics could have affected the process of Christianization.

Both gods developed enormously in the final stage prior to the imposition of Christianity. This was especially true in terms of Sol, because the many written sources provide us with a profound view in the centuries prior to the Christian phase, over which the deity grew in importance. Huitzilopochtli was included in a system that existed prior to the arrival of his worshipers. Both deities thrived from having a special relationship with the dominant group, with Huitzilopochtli gaining a place in the Mesoamerican worldview thanks to the Mexica's imperial thrust.

This special relationship with the dominant state seems to be the pattern. They coexist with other solar dedications, but they serve—directly or indirectly—to legitimize the ruler. This is especially evident in the importance of the warrior god Huitzilopochtli and the role of sacrifice in the Aztec cosmic structure, and by the role of Sol in legitimizing the late Roman ruler.

The important consideration of the solar substrate conditioned some of the missionaries' tools. It seems that the evident association of the solar and the divine in the late Roman world owed its ideas to late paganism, and it was precisely the coincidences in the pre-Colombian Mesoamerican world which allowed the use of figures like the Sun of Justice as elements of acculturation. Sol's importance in the pagan world is especially notable in the final pagan memory, written by thinkers like Julianus and Macrobius, who overstated this deity's role when they idealized some religious aspects of pre-Christian philosophical and religious thought. At least in fourth-century Rome, Sol became a unifying element, a point of reference for pagans. In Mesoamerica,

Huitzilopochtli was the Mexica's main god, and he accompanied them in their expansion and reinforced a key role for the Sun in the Mesoamerican worldview that the Spaniards found.

With their arrival, the idea of Sol retains a close relationship with the Christian deity, which can be expressed through solar metaphors or certain religious expressions. A good example of the Christian interpretation is the representation of Christ-Helios in the Vatican's Mausoleum M, the close relationship between Christmas and Natalis Solis Invicti, the Birthday of Sol Invictus (Hijmans, 2011), or the Dies Solis (Sunday) and Dominus Dei as the Lord's day. These equivalences transform Sol into an acceptable metaphor for expressing the divine within Christianity, becoming an understandable tool of acculturation, for both missionaries and the people that were being evangelized.

NOTES

1. There is not enough space here to discuss the incorporation of European motives into indigenous cosmography, a topic that is very interesting to address using sources that exhibit Spanish acculturation. See Bricker & Miram, 2002, p. 68; Carrasco, 1982; Díaz Álvarez, 2009; Nielsen & Reunert, 2009; Schwaller, 2006.

2. For an example, see Head & Gardner, 1877, p. 157, no. 58. On the reverse of this coin, minted in Perinthus during the reign of Severus Alexander (222–235 CE), Helios-Sol and Selene-Moon appear in the upper field as part of the Cosmos, framed by the zodiac; Jupiter-Zeus is depicted at the center. An image is available at the Wildwinds website: https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/severus_alexander/_perinthos_AE40_Moushmov_4637.jpg.

3. I believe that the discussion regarding the identification of the central figure as Earth (Navarrete & Heyden, 1974) or as a version with telluric and solar traits (Klein, 1977) does not affect the interpretation being made here. There are works that continue to identify this figure as a representation of Tonatiuh (Aguilar-Moreno, 2007, p. 181), and the relief's solar features are evident enough not to be ignored (Graulich, 1997, pp. 139–148). This allows us to confirm the importance of the Sun in the Mesoamerican cosmic order.

4. I refer here to the Stoic concept of *hegemonikon* (see Vogt, 2008, p. 140).

5. The understanding of a vertical world in Mesoamerican ideology is defended by Miguel León-Portilla through the Mixtec codices (*Rollo Selden*, *Códice Gómez de Orozco*) and those from the central highlands (for example the *Codex Vaticanus A*).

6. Jacques Soustelle (1982, p. 150) highlights the warrior god's similarities with other northern martial gods like Mixcoatl, Camaxtli, and others, under the understanding that only later will the Aztecs equate their god Huitzilopochtli with the Sun.

7. See García Cook & Arana A., 1982.

8. Maximinus: *RIC* 6: Antioch 167b, Alexandria 132, Cyzicus 92, Heraclea 78. Licinius: *RIC* 6: Nicomedia 73a, Cyzicus 98, Antioch 154b. Constantine: *RIC* 6: Antioch 154d.

9. *RIC* 4: Elagabalus 17, 28, 37–40, 198, 300–301, etc. Compare *RIC* 4: Elagabalus 61, bearing a representation of an eagle on a chariot bearing the legend CONSERVATORI AVG; *RIC* 4: Elagabalus 196, with a representation of an eagle resting on a *baetylus* with the legend SANCT DEO SOLI ELAGABAL.

10. This term, coined by Garibay (1940, p. 112), refers to a procedure for expressing an idea through two words that complete each other's meaning, either because they are synonyms or because they are adjacent.

11. See, for example, the famous relief of the Divine Triad of Baalshamîn, Aglibôl, and Malakbêl from Palmyra (first century CE), held by the Louvre, Paris (inventory number AO 19801). Photographs and a detailed catalog entry may be consulted online (https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010127854).

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5

Donkeys and Hares

The Enemy Warrior in the Early European Chronicles of the Conquest

Paolo Taviani

Toward the end of 1236, the Mongol army began its invasion of Europe. Hungary, Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine were attacked. In Moscow and Kiev, Krakow and Pest, looting and destruction spread. In winter the Danube froze. The Mongols crossed it and took Buda, entered Austria and reached the slopes of the Alps. To the south they conquered Split and set fire to Kotor (Jackson, 2005, pp. 63–74; Sinor, 1999). News of the Mongols' arrival spread rapidly. They inspired terror. The demonization of the enemy was set in motion.[1] The Mongols aroused the idea that the end of the world was coming. The hordes of warriors were identified with those of Gog and Magog who would run rampant as the Day of Judgment drew near (Bezzola, 1974, pp. 54–55, 105–108). In England, in the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Albans, Matthew Paris (n.d./1877) wrote his *Chronica Majora* [Greater Chronicle], including in full the testimony of a certain Ivo of Narbonne, translated here into English:

> An immense horde of that detestable race of Satan, the Tartars . . . rushed forth like demons loosed from Tartarus. . . . They are inhuman and of the nature of beasts, rather to be called monsters than man, thirsting after and drinking blood, and tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and human beings. . . . They are invincible in battle. . . . They have no human laws, know no mercy, and are crueler than lions or bears. (pp. 270–277)[2]

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c005

Figure 5.1. *The Tartar cannibals, sketched by Matthew Paris (mid-thirteenth century): "*Nephandi tartari vel tattari humanis carnibus vescentes*" [Wicked Tartars, or Tartars eating human flesh] (Paris, n.d., f. 167r). Reprinted with permission of the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.*

According to scholars, the goriest and most outrageous passages of the letter were additions by Paris himself (Hilpert, 1981, pp. 160–164). What is certain is that the beastly, diabolical traits of the Tartars were easily accepted in the monk's imagination. In fact, to give the most explicit account possible, Paris drew a macabre scene (figure 5.1) on the lower edge of the page of the manuscript: three Tartar warriors feasting on the flesh of the vanquished.[3]

The way Matthew Paris imagined the fearsome Tartars is a prime example which I believe can be a useful reference point for evaluating the way Europeans later conceived other enemy warriors, the indigenous peoples of the New World. This is because Paris's Tartars are not simply the result of the author's personal fantasy, nor are they the expression of a universal archetype. Rather, they are the image that the circumstantial information—the news of the Mongols' arrival—caused to unfold into view in a preexisting matrix, following a historically determined pattern, culturally shared but also dynamic and declinable, for representing the enemy warrior. Before going further, we should briefly review the genesis of this pattern. To do so, we must go back to the time when the Roman Empire turned Christian.

What drove Roman imperialism in those early centuries of expansion before it became Christian? This is a very old and tough question.[4] Fortunately, a simple observation might suffice here: Rome never went to war to educate foreign peoples, or to civilize the rest of the world. Rome would fight to ensure border security, or obtain new resources (including enslaved people), or extend its trading links. These were the reasons that led Rome to seek supremacy (*imperium*) over other peoples—as prophesied by Jupiter and recommended by Anchises in the famous verses of Virgil.[5] But in the same years in which Virgil was composing his poem, Horace—his friend and like him a celebrator of Augustus—wrote in his open letter to the latter ruler: "Captive Greece took captive her fierce conqueror, and introduced her arts into rude Latium."[6]

Of course, where Roman rule reached, its models of lifestyle arrived too. However, this process was a consequence of imperialism, not the driving force. Rome's imperialism was never grounded in a will—or alleged need—to export its cultural models and way of life.[7] This is evident both in the political debate of the time and in the historiographic narratives that soon followed (Mazzarino, 1956, 1966).

A certain civilizing initiative had already appeared in the political debate of the ancients, specifically in Athens during the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. *His. Pel*. 2.37–41). And before that, in the Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions, military expansion of the empire was strongly attributed to the will—or at least to the grace—of a "great god" (Ach. R. Ins. DBi 5–9, XPh 3–4). But Roman imperialism, from the beginning, had very little interest in ideological or theological expansionism. With regard to gods, we have to consider that when inciting the Roman legions to war, or when justifying the wars of conquest after they had taken place, no one ever appealed to the desire to spread the cult of Jupiter or Quirinus, of Juno or Minerva, nor even the cult of the emperor. No one ever used such an argument, neither with sincerity—that is, believing what he said—nor opportunistically, as would so often happen later. Roman temples were founded almost everywhere in the ancient world. and the cult of the Capitoline triad, or that of the emperor, spread with the expansion of the empire. But the legions did not fight for the founding of those temples, nor for the spread of that cult. As Woolf explains,

> Religion has had a more central place in other imperial expansions. . . . Other Roman institutions played a much greater part in promoting and facilitating expansion: patronage and slavery, military alliance, and Roman law are obvious examples. The gods, it seems, were passengers on this journey. (2012, pp. 121–122)

Things changed afterwards. Eventually, in the fourth century, with Constantine and Theodosius, the decisive turning point was reached. During this period, those who lived in the Empire felt that they were under siege. The anonymous Latin author of a treatise on war machines wrote: "Above all it must be recognized that wild nations are pressing upon the Roman Empire and howling round about it everywhere [*circumlatrantes*], and treacherous barbarians, covered by natural positions, are assailing every frontier" (*De reb. bel.* 6.1). It was in a context described thus, by an observer of the time, that the process of integration between the Church and the Empire occurred.

For Christian communities it was a radical ideological twist. Early Christianity shared the aversion of other Jewish movements to Rome's supremacy, although this was manifested as a kind of detached indifference. The Empire was dust. It was irrelevant in any case—in the eyes of the Lord—and not even worth fighting against. At the end of time, Rome's power would be swept away. Paul the Apostle and his companions believed that the end was imminent.[8] In the fourth century, however, Christians began to see the Empire in a completely different light. During their military exploits, writes Eusebius of Caesarea, God and the Son of God led the emperors, Constantine and his son Crispus. They fought with them; they were their *symmáchoi* [allies] (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 10.9; see especially 10.9.4). Because the victories of the Empire are based on God's will, they are part of his plan. For Christians, the Empire became the instrument through which the good news would be spread throughout the world.[9] The newly converted Julius Firmicus Maternus, addressing the Emperors Constans and Constantius, wrote:

> After the destruction of the temples, you are advanced greatly by the power of God. You have conquered enemies; you have extended the empire. . . . At no time has the venerable hand of God deserted you; at no time has he denied aid to you while laboring. (Firm. Mat. *Err. prof. rel.* 28.6.95–101, 29.3.45–56)

Imperial Christianity tended to interpret the message of the Gospel in drastic terms: humanity was divided into two parts, those who act in the name of God and those who oppose it. Did the Master not say: "He who is not with me is against me"? (Matthew 12:30, Luke 11:23). Those who oppose God must necessarily fall under the sphere of influence of the Devil. At the end of the fourth century, the two halves of humanity—those with God and those with Satan—corresponded, respectively, to the Empire and its enemies. These enemies might be internal or external: heretics, rebels, pagans, and barbarians. Thus, a theological conception of war was established, tying back, in a way, to what was already found in the Old Testament (Yahweh levelling the way in

front of the armies of Israel), but adding a new trend, that of the universal propagation of the one true faith. This trend, absent in the Jewish tradition, tends to coincide with the Roman Empire's expansionism.

In early Christian literature, war and weapons appeared as metaphorical elements. Military metaphors were habitually used to describe the struggle between demons and the people of God. It is a rhetorical model that dates to Paul the Apostle.[10] He imagined the weapons of the *miles Christi*, the soldier of Christ, as weapons only in a metaphorical sense. None of the Christians, at the beginning, advocated the use of real weapons in the name of God. Later, however, following Constantine and Theodosius, the use of weapons and the practice of prayer began to be very concretely and reciprocally connected. A letter by Augustine of Hippo demonstrates this association precisely and succinctly, as in a mathematical formula. In a reply to his friend Boniface—a general who asked for enlightenment on the compatibility of the Christian faith with the profession of the soldier—Saint Augustine allays his every doubt, writing: *"Alii ergo pro vobis orando pugnant contra invisibiles inimicos; vos pro eis pugnandolaboratis contra visibiles barbaros"* [Some, then, in praying for you, fight against your invisible enemies; you, in fighting for them, contend against the barbarians, their visible enemies] (August. *Ep*. 189.5.17–19). The Christian Empire is defended and expanded through prayer and battle. Alongside the spiritual and metaphorical weapon of prayers, now the more concrete prayer of weapons appears. The invisible enemies are the demons. The difference between barbarians and demons is a mere question of visibility. It becomes implicit, even obvious, that the enemy warriors are possessed—or at least could be possessed—by demons, since the enemy warriors of the Christian Empire are *milites Diaboli*, soldiers of the Devil.

This way of conceiving conflicts fit perfectly into imperial and Christian ideology. However, it proved effective and lasting for another reason as well: it helped to better bear the weight of military defeats. Should there be a defeat, it reduced the risk of losing confidence in eventual victory. Recalling de Martino's dialectics on cultural crisis and strategies for redemption, we can say that the figure of the warrior-demon became the linchpin of a device for preventive redemption (1954, pp. 18–19).[11] Powered by satanic force, the *milites Diaboli* are able to deliver terrible blows—such as the first sack of Christian Rome in 410—but the final victory will always belong to the *milites Christi* because this is God's will. In fact, over the course of the following centuries, the more serious the threat perceived, the more vivid the image of the demon-possessed warrior would become, just as it was during the Mongol invasions in Matthew Paris's day.

It is on these premises that I would turn to consider the way indigenous warriors were represented in European reports during the years of the conquest of America. What follows is, for me, a survey of a new territory. It is one which can certainly be subject to further investigation and verification, but which nevertheless finds its *raison d'être* precisely in the premises that constitute my starting point, that is, in the framework of a comparative perspective. What role did the stereotype of the warrior-demon play in building up the image of the Amerindian warriors?

The first description of the Indians to be made public is the one found in the famous *Letter to Santángel*, written by Christopher Columbus in early March 1493, having just landed in Lisbon after his first transoceanic voyage (Columbus, 1990).[12] Columbus writes that the natives he encountered "have no iron or steel, nor any weapons; nor are they fit thereunto; not because they be not a well-formed people and of fair stature, but that they are most wondrously timorous." As weapons they use only reeds, on the top of which they insert a sharp stick, but "even these, they dare not use," as they prefer to flee. Therefore, Columbus has decided to leave a garrison on one of those islands, near a fort, and he is sure that there will be no problems, because neither that king nor his men "know what arms are, and go naked. . . . they are the most timorous creatures there are in the world." And the Spaniards in the garrison, if they just wanted to, could destroy the whole island. The Admiral heard of those who live on a certain island called Quaris (Carib), people that the natives of all the other islands consider "ferocious" and cannibals. But he believes that they are no more fearful than those he has met in person, and that they actually are ferocious only in comparison with others who are really very cowardly.[13]

A dozen years later, in Augsburg, the famous *Mundus Novus* was published (Vespucci, 1996b).[14] It revealed to readers across Europe that the newly discovered lands on the other side of the Atlantic were a new portion of the world, completely unknown before that time. The first publication of the brochure was sponsored by a group of Italian and German businessmen, led by the powerful Bartolomeo Marchionni, based in Lisbon (Descendre, 2010, pp. 680–681, 685; Luzzana Caraci, 1999, Vol. 2, pp. 65, 72, 359).[15] The goal was to promote and motivate a financing firm for a new expedition across the Atlantic.[16] The text elaborately interweaves first- and secondhand information (Luzzana Caraci, 1999, Vol. 2, p. 71). In it we read that the peoples of the New World "wage war upon one another without art or order. . . . Their weapons are bows and arrows, and when they advance to war, they cover no part of their bodies for the sake of protection, so like beasts are they in this matter." Those that are

taken prisoner are eaten. And it is not only prisoners; there, human flesh is a common food. Vespucci (1996b) says he himself saw "salted human flesh hanged up to dry between the huts, just as we use to hang bacon" (pp. 310–311). The cannibalism of the Native Americans spread in the European imagination but was not depicted as something hard to defeat. The Indians are cannibals, but not warriors to be feared.

It is worth noting that in both texts the naivety of the natives is manifested both in war and in the economic sphere. Columbus (1990) says that they are happy to give precious things in exchange for objects of no value: they "gave whatever they had, like senseless brutes" (p. 312). The *Mundus Novus* states that they have no markets and do not know commerce (Vespucci, 1996b, p. 310). The enthusiastic advertising is clear and the goal was the same: to persuade readers that investment in transatlantic expeditions was a fantastic deal.

The reports of the first clashes between natives and Europeans do not evoke a very different impression. The indigenous warriors are relatively dangerous with their arrows, but it is easy to protect oneself from these with the shields provided by Western technology. On a few occasions, there are natives who may even appear less cowardly than usual and who deserve to be esteemed for their *osadía* [bravery] (Álvarez Chanca, 1993, p. 26), but to defeat them it takes only a few cannon shots or the unsheathing of swords. In the largest clash, Vespucci (1996a) describes how fifty-seven Europeans set hundreds of enemy warriors on the run, killing many and capturing 250, themselves counting only one casualty and twenty wounded (pp. 350–351; see also pp. 339–340). It is not difficult to keep the natives at bay, even when they are hostile and fighting. However, they may have some nasty surprises in store. The classic example is another episode described by Vespucci. In August 1501 he was part of an overseas expedition. Having reached a "new land," the Christians dropped anchor and tried to make contact with the locals, who seemed rather suspicious:

> On the seventh day we went on shore, and we found that they had arranged with their women; for us, we jumped on shore, the men of the land sent many of their women to speak with us. Seeing that they were not reassured, we arranged to send to them one of our people, who was a very agile and valiant youth. To give them more confidence, the rest of us went back into the boats. He went among the women, and they all began to touch and feel him, wondering at him exceedingly. Things being so, we saw a woman come from the hill, carrying a great stick in her hand. When she came to where our Christian stood, she raised it, and gave him such a blow that he was felled to the ground. The other women immediately took him by the feet and dragged him toward the hill. (Vespucci, 1996a, p. 370)

Figure 5.2. *The oldest depiction of a native American assaulting a European soldier (1509). Woodcut, 12.2 x 9.7 cm. Amerigo Vespucci,* Won der Nüwe Welt. *Reprinted from Ferro et al., 1991, p. 317.*

After a skirmish, and the retreat of the Indians on the hill, "the women were still tearing the Christian to pieces. At a great fire they had made, they roasted him before our eyes, showing us many pieces, and then eating them" (pp. 370–371).

Vespucci is not highly respected for his trustworthiness, and that is particularly true for this episode. But what matters here is that this was precisely the episode that caused a real stir among European readers of the time, contributing decisively to the public success of the pamphlet (Luzzana Caraci, 1999, Vol. 2, p. 90). It also became the subject of one of the earliest depictions of American cannibalism, as an engraving (figure 5.2) printed in the German edition of the same text, in 1509.[17]

In words and images, it was the first time European audiences were offered an example of a Christian soldier killed and eaten by the cannibals of the New World. It seems significant that he is killed not by an enemy warrior with some degree of bravery, cunning, or possession by demons, but by a woman who strikes from behind, taking him by surprise.

Even in the sources of the following years, when there was less superficial knowledge of the indigenous Americans and the conquest had begun, certain constants tended to remain. One of the most noteworthy testimonies is that of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. In two adjacent sections (chapters 24–25), Cabeza de Vaca (1542/1984) describes indigenous warfare. The most negative trait he notes is that whenever there is "particular enmity, they snare and kill each other at night, unless they are members of the same family, and inflict great cruelties on one another." But Cabeza de Vaca also stresses their great ability to resolve disputes within the community peacefully, seeing to it that the anger of the contenders "has subsided." With regard to techniques in battle, he writes at one point: "They all are warriors and so astute in guarding themselves from an enemy as if trained in continuous wars and in Italy" (pp. 103–107).

Courage, cunning, and skill: not even a hint of demon-possession appears in these warriors. This may be due to the author's vision; in fact, Cabeza de Vaca believes he is on the right side, on the side of the only true God. However, his way of viewing the indigenous peoples is quite particular. Although he does happen to mention a case of anthropophagy, it is subsistence anthropophagy, practiced by Europeans (p. 87). He even denies that they make sacrifices and worship idols (p. 137). Cabeza de Vaca lived with the indigenous people of Florida for years and became somewhat integrated into their communities. It seems that this experience drastically reduced the weight of certain stereotypes in his way of seeing things. More than any other European of his time, Cabeza de Vaca seems to have acquired the right distance from which to observe the other. Thus, his testimony is valuable on a whole, but much less helpful for a more specific study of the stereotype.

Quite different indeed is the case of Hans Staden, who also recounts his experiences among the indigenous Americans. His *Warhaftig Historia* [True History] (1557) is a triumph of stereotypes. The entire book is centered on ritual cannibalism among the Tupinambá of present-day Brazil. Staden describes some scenes of the Indians fighting and also dedicates a chapter to their weapons (Staden, 1557/1978, Pt. 1, chapters 4, 18–19, 42; Pt. 2, chapter 28). However even his pages do not reveal demon-possessed warriors. The "savages" are lightning fast in combat. They are good archers and when attacking they may threaten to eat their enemies. At one point, Staden himself gets them to give him a bow and arrow, and fights with them, like them: "I shouted and shot arrows in their manner, as best I could" (Pt. 1, chapter 29). What distinguishes Staden from the savages is not the manner of fighting, but principally the acts of cannibalism. Tupinambá cannibalism—as Staden presents it—is the essential part of certain ceremonies, but is not based on an insatiable,

aggressive thirst for blood. Staden's Tupinambá are not aggressive like bears and lions. As Diego Álvarez Chanca (1993, p. 22), the doctor on Columbus's first expedition, had already written, the Indians fight and take prisoners in order to celebrate feasts.

A rather more institutional author than Staden was Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo,[18] official chronicler of the Indies. Recent criticism has cast light on a certain variability in his attitude toward indigenous Americans, influenced by changing events as well as by developments in Spanish law (Myers, 2007, pp. 113 and following). However, for most of his life he saw the connection between the Indians and the Devil as a simple fact and believed that in many cases such a situation could be remedied only by eliminating them. One of his most quoted maxims establishes an instructive parallel between the gunpowder used to fire on the native "infidels" and the incense burned to honor God: a concrete and updated—if perhaps a bit extreme—result of the Augustinian formula we saw above.[19] Yet, browsing his pages, we see that this demonic trait is tied not so much to warring tendencies in the American indigenous, but to other "abominable customs," mainly idolatry, anthropophagy, and sexual behaviors, all elements often intertwined with the celebration of feasts (Oviedo y Valdés, 1854, pp. 124–140). Oviedo also stigmatizes the indigenous Americans' bellicosity—that of the Island Carib archers in particular (pp. 31–35)—but this is not the strongest argument for their links with demons. They are rather warlike, but not too much so, and not all of them; some are even peaceful.

A passage in Oviedo y Valdés contains an interesting detail. It is taken from the preface to book 5 of the *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* [General and Natural History of the Indies]:

> These Indians (for the most part of them) are a people far removed from wanting to understand the Catholic faith, and it is a case of hammering cold iron [i.e., futile] to think that they will ever be Christians. This is how things have seemed to them in their cowls, or better yet, in their heads, as they do not wear cowls, nor were their heads like those of other folk, for they have such robust, thick skulls that the most important piece of advice which Christians have when they do battle with them is not to hit their heads by blades, as their swords will shatter. Just as their skulls are thick, so is their reasoning bestial and ill-intentioned. (1854, pp. 124–125)[20]

Skillful in the use of metaphor, the historian finally reaches his point: the Indians have a "bestial and badly inclined understanding." As far as I can recall, the topos of the "thick head," so difficult for the Christian faith to penetrate,

had already appeared in the literature of colonization when, at the end of the twelfth century, the *dura cervix* [stiff neck] was that of the Irish, in the words of Giraldus Cambrensis (1867, p. 83), a staunch supporter of English supremacy over Ireland. But Oviedo is not just presenting a metaphor; he sets up a scene by describing a battle. Significantly, he assigns the indigenous Americans a completely passive role. The problem is merely the fact that their skulls are naturally hard and tough (like that of donkeys, as we shall soon see). In the New World, solidarity with the Devil does not produce fearful warriors but obtuse individuals naturally resistant to the one true faith.

The stereotype of the warrior-demon seems to have had little effect on European relations with the Indians. There may be a very simple reason for this, namely that Christian Europe never really felt threatened by them. However, there was certainly no shortage of occasions when European settlers felt directly threatened by the Indians. It will be useful to see at least a couple of examples.

Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, a member of the Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies, tried to maintain a middle ground between enemies and defenders of the Indians. In one of his letters to Francesco Sforza, in 1524, having reported various reprehensible actions by the conquistadors and wishing to rebalance the scales to justify the institutional refusal to allow them freedom, he reported an incident that took place in the Chiribichi region of present-day Venezuela (Anghiera, 1530/2005, p. 776). The Dominicans had built a convent there and dedicated themselves to raising and educating the children of the indigenous notables. It appeared as if they had managed to do so, until one day two of them, having become young men, the very ones that the Dominicans "thought they had converted from the *natura ferina* of their ancestors to the dogmas of Christ and to human ways," find a shelter to flee to, "like wolves," and "resumed the evil customs of their origins." They gathered several armed men from the nearby territories, took command, and attacked the convent. They conquered it, destroyed it and slaughtered everyone, educators and servants alike.

According to Anghiera, this episode is "*particolaris horrida causa*" [the most serious among the reasons] justifying the refusal to grant freedom to the Indians. What the European settlers have to fear is not the natives' warlike strength, but the risk of nursing snakes at their breast. The more the threat is felt, the more the stereotype stands out, but even here it is restrained, nuanced, referenced only through allusion. Anghiera does not represent the two boys as demonic warriors, though he comes close. The two young man behave more like wolves.

It was not only Anghiera's personal sensibilities that were affected by the events at Chiribichi. There was fallout on an institutional level as well. Some of the friars escaped death because they were away at the time of the assault. Afterwards, one by the name of Tomás Ortiz presented a report to the Council of the Indies, followed by a very frank comment on the nature of the Indians. Anghiera (1530/2005), who was present at the meeting, gives it word for word. It is a well-known text, but it is worth rereading.

> On the mainland they eat human flesh. They are more given to sodomy than any other nation. There is no justice among them. They go naked. They have no respect either for love or for virginity. They are stupid and silly. They have no respect for truth, save when it is to their advantage. They are unstable. They have no knowledge of what foresight means. They are ungrateful and changeable. They boast of intoxicating themselves with drinks they manufacture from certain herbs, fruits, and grains, like our beers and ciders. They are vain of the products they harvest and eat. They are brutal. They delight in exaggerating their defects. There is no obedience among them, or deference on the part of the young for the old, nor of the son for the father. They are incapable of learning. Punishments have no effect upon them. Traitorous, cruel, and vindictive, they never forgive. Most hostile to religion, idle, dishonest, abject, and vile, in their judgments they keep no faith or law. Husbands observe no fidelity toward their wives, nor the wives toward their husbands. Liars, superstitious, and as cowardly as hares [*covardes como liebres*]. They eat fleas, spiders, and worms raw, whenever they find them. They exercise none of the humane arts or industries. When taught the mysteries of our religion, they say that these things may suit Castilians, but not them, and they do not wish to change their customs. They are beardless and if sometimes hairs grow, they pull them out. They have no sympathy with the sick and if one of them is gravely ill, his friends and neighbors carry him out into the mountains to die there. Putting a little food and water beside his head they go away. The older they get the worse they become. About the age of ten or twelve years, they seem to have some civilization, but later they become like real brute beasts. I may therefore affirm that God has never created a race fuller of vice and composed without the least mixture of kindness or culture. . . . We have seen this with our own eyes: they are as foolish as donkeys [*insensatos como asnos*] and they give very little importance to killing themselves. (p. 778)

It is noteworthy that throughout the report there is not a single reference to organized violence, war, or combat. The only minimal statement to this regard is that the Indians are "*as cowardly as hares*." In the official account, the wolves have become hares. Or possibly donkeys.

In another circumstance—perhaps the most famous of all—the conquistadors found themselves in a desperate situation. I am referring to the days preceding and following the *Noche Triste* [Night of Sorrows] in June and July 1520. The Spaniards and their allies, the Tlaxcalans, all led by Cortés,[21] had first been under siege in Mexico Tenochtitlan, and were then forced to leave the city in haste and flee for seven days before they were able to shake off the enemy pursuit. In the report of the events he sent to Charles V, Cortés (1985) indicates the cause of that temporary defeat: the enormous disparity in numbers between the sides (pp. 157, 159–160). It is very likely that this was a reason of convenience,[22] but this is not the point. Cortés recalls that the enemies attacked "shouting," but also that they fought "hard," "bravely," and "strongly" (pp. 156, 159, 165–166). Nothing else. It may be, as Todorov writes, that Cortés is capable of understanding, before taking and destroying (Todorov, 1982, pp. 163–169). But Bernal Díaz del Castillo[23] (1632/1977) remembers the events more or less in the same way: the problem was the enemies' number (Vol. 1, pp. 385–399, passim; see also p. 114). He does, however, add a detail explaining that during the siege, when the rebels shouted threats, they said "that they had to sacrifice to their gods" the flesh and blood of their enemies, and they had to celebrate, feasting on their legs and arms (p. 387). The problem with the Indians always appears to be their strange way of feasting.

In the famous dispute between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, in Valladolid (mid-sixteenth century),[24] many aspects of the indigenous peoples of the Americas were discussed, but none referred to demon-possessed warriors.[25] As regards Las Casas, it will be useful to take a look at his writings,[26] even if—according to him—it was not the Indians that stood with Satan, but the conquistadors. In attacking the natives, the Spaniards are "devils," and "the devils of Hell" are no worse, wrote the Protector of the Indians (Las Casas, 1552/2006, pp. 222, 228). It is, however, in the third part of his *Historia de las Indias* [History of the Indies] that we find a more interesting passage. Las Casas (1986) describes the massacre of Coanao, in what is now Cuba, which he himself witnessed. A group of about a hundred Spaniards, having arrived at a village, wanted to test the blades of their swords, which had been sharpened a few hours earlier. "A Spaniard, in whom the Devil is thought to have clothed himself, suddenly drew his sword. Then the whole one hundred drew theirs and began to rip open the bellies and to cut and kill those lambs—men, women, children, and old folk" (pp. 113–114). The stereotype of the demon-possessed warrior here appears quite clearly and is almost explicit. After so many missed opportunities, it

Figure 5.3. *The oldest picture of the indigenous people of the Americas (1493). Woodcut, 11.7 x 11.3 cm. In Giuliano Dati,* La Lettera delle Isole Nuovamente Trovate. *Reprinted from Ferro et al., 1991, p. 299.*

is rather surprising to find it in this episode, referring to a Spanish soldier, instead of to the natives.

Before concluding, we may consider a few other images. The first European depictions of Native Americans are woodcuts. In the oldest original one (figure 5.3),[27] we see armed natives in the background. They are naked and some of them are holding reeds, those reeds that they possess but "dare not use," as Columbus had written. In fact, as we see here, upon the arrival of the Europeans, the natives flee.

From the early sixteenth century we have the first engravings with indigenous warriors in the foreground (figure 5.4). They are armed with bows and arrows, and with clubs and pikes as well. All of them are illustrations for various editions of writings attributed to Vespucci, published between 1505 and

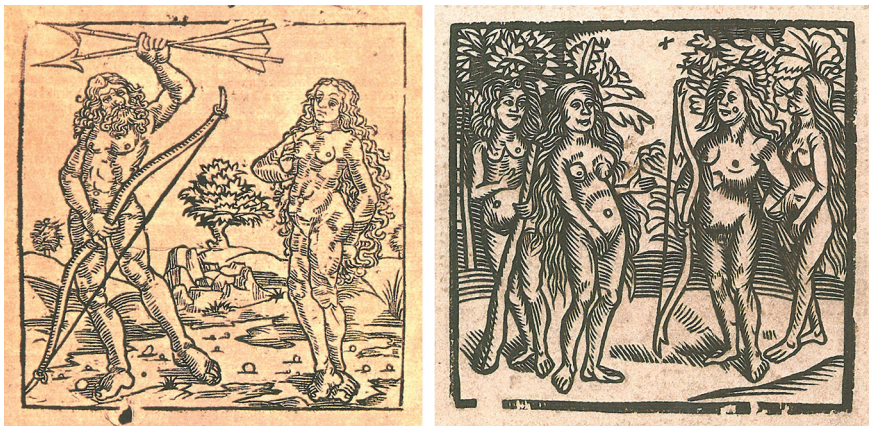

Figure 5.4. *Native Americans in arms (1505 and 1507). Left: woodcut, 12.3 x 12.2 cm. In Amerigo Vespucci,* Epistola Albericij: De Nouo Mundo. *Right: woodcut, 8.0 x 8.3 cm. In Amerigo Vespucci,* Van der Nieuwer Werelt. *Reprinted from Ferro et al., 1991, pp. 309, 311.*

1507. The human figures still have very European traits and attitudes inspired by Renaissance figurative art. In some—such as the two shown here—the weapons are at rest, and we can see women alongside the warriors.

From the same edition of the Dutch version of the *Mundus Novus*, we find the first depiction of Native Americans in combat (figure 5.5). The scene is rather odd, in that the engraver's intent is to represent a combat using bows and arrows, but having in mind the image of a sword fight. In any case, it is a military scene with all male figures, and no acts of cannibalism are depicted.

As far as we know, the oldest depiction of American cannibalism is a large engraving printed in Augsburg, probably in 1505, and attributed to Johann Froschauer.[28] Added to the engraving is a long caption, based on information found in the letters attributed to Vespucci.[29] But what is notable is how the information has been reworked and interpreted by the engraver (figure 5.6).

A woman is nursing her baby while two children are gazing at her. A mature warrior, carrying a bow at rest, dominates the scene. He beholds the woman both lovingly and with authority. Two other warriors are talking to each other. It is, however, the background that reveals the heart of the picture. We see a convivial scene in which a man is eating a human forearm while another is kissing a woman who, in turn, is about to eat a human thigh. From a beam of the shed hangs half of a human body in the smoke. The three men with weapons show no aggressive or feral traits. Everything seems very calm, serene, and

Figure 5.5. *The oldest picture of native Americans in combat (1507). Woodcut, 7.7 x 9.2 cm. In Amerigo Vespucci,* Van der Nieuwer Werelt. *Reprinted from Ferro et al., 1991, p. 307.*

quiet. At sea, European ships are coming and going. It is a scene of everyday life. The Indians placidly practice free love and eat human flesh.

Part 1 of Staden's book—the narrative—contains at least six engravings concerning battles in the Americas; none make references to cannibalism (Staden, 1557/1978, Pt. 1, chapters 4, 14, 19, 29, 41–42). Cannibalism does appear in two other engravings belonging to the same part. One of these show women and children in a village, but no armed men (Staden, 1557/1978, Pt. 1, chapter 40). The other one is a unique case in the entire book, showing people bearing arms and acts of cannibalism (Staden, 1557/1978, Pt. 1, chapter 43). The setting is a temporary camp, were Tupinambá warriors return from battle. The text explains that they bring with them prisoners able to walk, who will be taken to the permanent village to later be killed and eaten during the usual feasts. To not let anything go to waste, the Tupinambá also bring some wounded enemies to be eaten on the spot. It is however in the second part of the book—the ethnographic section—that we find the most consistent and homogenous set

Figure 5.6. *The oldest depiction of American cannibalism (ca. 1505): "*Sy essen auch ainander selbs*" [They also eat one another]. Woodcut with watercolor, text printed from metal type, 17.7 x 12.4 cm. Attributed to Johann Froschauer, in Augsburg, and based on Amerigo Vespucci's* Letters. *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Einblattdruck II. Reprinted with permission of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.*

of figures describing ritual anthropophagy. Step by step, each phase of the ceremony is represented (Staden, 1557/1978, Pt. 2, chapter 29). Cannibals are not depicted as warriors, they are not carrying weapons, and with them there are always women and even children. The atmosphere of the scenes is that of a folk festival. In the years that followed, cannibalism was also represented with more cruelty and a darker atmosphere, as for example in the engravings published in André Thevet's *Cosmographie Universelle* [Universal Cosmography] and *America Tertia Pars* [America: Part III], edited and illustrated by Theodore de Bry. However, even among such works, we find scenes that show women and children in the foreground, but not armed warriors (Thevet, 1575, f. 946r; de Bry, 1592, p. 179).[30]

Our journey has reached its conclusion. The sources we have treated have very different approaches, intentions, and recipients. Authors such as Cabeza de Vaca and Oviedo, Vespucci and Las Casas, Staden and Cortés, had very little in common with each other. However, despite all the differences, they all seem to be very reluctant to tie to the Native Americans the stereotype we

are considering. By reading their works, and observing the figures that enrich their texts, the impression one gets is that the figure of the demon-possessed warrior, fearsome and bloodthirsty, occurs quite rarely in the early depictions of the indigenous people of Americas.

It is worth wondering why. Had the stereotype gone out of fashion? It would not seem so, given what Las Casas wrote about the Spanish butcher who instigated the massacre of Coanao. Or perhaps the reason is the one we have already mentioned, that the Native Americans were never a military threat to Europe? This could be the simple reason. However, we have seen that the indigenous warriors were, on certain occasions, a very dangerous threat to the conquistadors. Furthermore—other than the *Noche Triste* and similar situations—how many failed European expeditions were there? How many expeditions got lost and were never heard from again? Or—more generally speaking—was it that the Europeans' attitude toward non-Christian peoples had become more favorable? Well, the tone of the report on the Chiribichi's defects, as well as the opinions of people like Oviedo, do not seem to confirm this idea. There were, perhaps, also other reasons that led the Europeans to use the stereotype of the demon-possessed warrior so judiciously.

When the first caravels arrived in the Indies, the plan was not conquest but business. What no one had expected to find was all that land and all that potential labor force. What use could be made of it all? The theological and ideological debate about the natives—their nature, their souls, and their intellect—revolved around this problem. What was to be done with the Indians? Keep them as slaves? Involve them in the exploitation of their lands? Or—since they did not seem to create much profit, but rather trouble—exterminate them?

While all this was being discussed, it was nonetheless necessary to keep them available as a labor force and to keep their land attractive for investors. This would be done not only through concrete initiatives, or groundwork, but also with adequate work in terms of symbolism. On the symbolic front, Satan—the demonization of the "other"—was certainly a winning card.[31] But having Satan too firmly connected to the indigenous warriors could backfire. Proposing investments in the New World would become more difficult. Who in Europe, in those years, even after the missions of Giovanni da Pian del Carpine and followers, would have financed an expedition to conquer Mongolia? But luckily, it just so happened that the Indians were cannibals who practiced free love. Thence there was a symbolic solution: Satan's influence manifests itself in their idolatrous ceremonies, which involved cannibalism and free love. The theme of the demon-possessed warriors remained more

or less implied, but it was placed in the background, or it was just left unspoken. This was not a planned solution, but rather a frame of reference toward which various voices gradually aligned themselves, more or less consciously and intentionally, a sort of habit that became more firmly established the wider it spread. Was it also a trick? Was it a means for deceiving the European courts and financiers? I do believe so, and I would also say that it worked rather well. Historiographically speaking, however, the deception also caused at the least some severe collateral damage: it obscured the military art of the Native Americans for centuries. We can get a sense of this just by comparing the few pages Prescott (1843/1936, pp. 30–32) devoted to the Aztec military structure with the recent works of Ross Hassig (1988, 1992).

A great deal has been written about cannibalism in the Americas,[32] from the classic Volhard (1939) to the radical Arens (1979), to the ponderous work by Jáuregui (2008), with its fifty-page bibliography. It has been debated for centuries to what extent it was grounded in the habits and customs of the peoples observed, and to what extent in the stereotypes of the observers. But the topic I am speaking about is much narrower. It is the issue of the link between the cannibal and the demon-possessed warrior as imagined by Christian Europe. The sources examined show that this link could be worked into different solutions according to the historical conditions and needs—ideological or cultural, but also economic—that fed it. The Tartar cannibals are very different from the Native American cannibals.

When Columbus encountered the Indians for the first time, he was surprised to see that they were not familiar with swords; when they touched them, they wounded themselves because they grasped them by the blade. Columbus jotted down a few words in his log, addressed to Spanish royalty: "These people are very naive about weapons. . . . whenever Your Highnesses may command, all of them can be taken to Castile or held captive on this same island; because with fifty men all of them could be held in subjection and can be made to do whatever one might wish" (Columbus, 1990, pp. 42–43). Columbus was an extraordinary navigator and a good geographer, but he certainly did not excel in political and military acumen. Now he really believed he had found the path to fame, power, and wealth. He put his trust in the power of Christendom and in the meekness of the natives. He did not imagine that in a short time, swords very similar to those with which the natives hurt themselves by mistake—maybe even those same swords—would have slaughtered the local people just to test their sharpness. In October of 1492, Columbus was very optimistic; the Indians made him daydream. But in just over a year, after the La Navidad disaster,[33] the situation would radically change. The

idyllic panorama, as it had appeared at first, had been turned upside down. Columbus's dream was shattered. Yet, even after that point, something of that dream, so agreeable and tempting, would continue to infect the image of the Native Americans that would gradually be offered to the European public: the image of an extremely barbarous people, but very easy to dominate.

NOTES

1. On the roots of this ideological mechanism, see below. In general, on the instrumentalization of xenophobia in the Middle Ages by the ruling classes via the Church, see Connell, 2015.

2. See Lewis (1987, pp. 283–288); Saunders (1969).

3. On the attribution of the drawing, see Lewis, 1987, p. 441.

4. It dates back at least to the time of Polybius (1.6.3–6, 1.20.1–2, 2.31.8, 3.2.6, 3.4.2–3). In more recent times, from the mid-nineteenth century until today, two interpretations have emerged: the defensive theory (Frank, 1914, especially pp. vii–viii, 8–9, 185–186, 305–306; Holleaux, 1921, 1930; Mommsen, 1864) and the aggressive economic theory (De Sanctis, 1916–1923, especially 1923, pp. 24–26; Finley, 1978; Harris, 1979, 1984; Mazzarino, 1947, 1956; Musti, 1978; Woolf, 2012). The debate is far from over. In this regard, Erik S. Gruen (1973) remarked: "The motives and purposes behind Rome's imperial expansion constitute an old, old question. But the question has not lost its appeal. Its stands as confirmation of an honored cliché: historical problems are examined anew by each generation, in the light of its own experiences and with the aid of its fresh insights. Although the enterprise is welcome and constructive, it follows, alas, that the solution will never be fully satisfactory" (p. 273). See also Hoyos, 2013.

5. Verg. *Aen*. 1.278–279, 6.851–853.

6. *"Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis / intulit agresti Latio"* (Hor. *Epist*. 2.156–157). English translation by Fairclough, 1926.

7. This can be said whatever opinion one has about the concept of "Romanization": cf. Fentress, 2000; Le Roux, 2006; Woolf, 2014.

8. See 1 Corinthians 7:29, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Cf. Mark 9:1, Matthew 10:23, 24:34.

9. In the fifth century, a similar conception of the empire was also reflected in the works of non-Christian authors who were competing with Christianity, such as Rutilius Namatianus, who conceived the empire as a diffuser of "rights" (*iura*), unlike the Christian message (Rut. Namat. 1.63–66).

10. See Ephesians 6:10–17, Romans 13:12, 1 Corinthians 10:4, 2 Corinthians 6:7.

11. See also Taviani, P., 2012, pp. 43–46.

12. Published in Castilian, on April 1, 1493, in Barcelona; then in Latin (Rome, three editions), and as an Italian poem (one edition in Rome, two in Florence), the same year.

Six further editions were published in 1494, in Paris, Basel, and Antwerp. See Varela, 1988, pp. 63–69.

13. *"Son ferozes entre estos otros pueblos que son en demasiaso grado covardes"* [They are ferocious among these other peoples, who are extremely cowardly] (Columbus, 1990, pp. 318–319).

14. Translated into Latin in Lisbon, "remodeled and retouched," within two years the letter spread in a dozen editions, published in Nuremberg, Rostock, Cologne, Strasbourg, Antwerp, Paris, Venice, and Rome. Editions in German, Flemish, and Italian followed, with a total of about sixty editions by 1530.

15. On Marchionni, see also Guidi Bruscoli, 2014, pp. 135–177.

16. The expedition set sail from Lisbon in 1505, led by Francisco de Almeida, funded by, among others, the Fuggers and the Welsers; the latter had their own base at Augsburg. See Luzzana Caraci, 1999, Vol. 2, pp. 72–75.

17. See also Chicangana-Bayona, 2010, pp. 49–52; Milbrath, 1989, p. 190.

18. On Oviedo, see Botta, in this volume.

19. *"¿Quién puede dudar que la pólvora contra los infieles es incienso para el Señor?"* [Who can doubt that gunpowder against the infidels is incense for the Lord?], as quoted in Hanke, 1949, p. 189.

20. See also Oviedo y Valdés, 1526/1950, p. 37.

21. On Hernán Cortés, see Wright-Carr and Devecka, in this volume.

22. See Restall, 2003, pp. 2–3, 44 and following.

23. On Bernal Díaz del Castillo, see Devecka, in this volume.

24. Regarding this dispute, see Marco Simón, in this volume.

25. See Soto, 1995; Hanke, 1974.

26. See the chapters by Botta, Olivier, and Devecka, in this book.

27. The poem is based on the *Letter to Santángel* (Colombus, 1990). The same engraving also appears in the 1495 edition of Dati's book and was later reused, reversed, for an edition of Vespucci's *Letter to Soderini* (1996a, pp. 321–383). Another engraving related to Native Americans may be older than this one, even if printed in the same year. It represents the landing of Columbus and an exchange of gifts with naked natives. But it is a recycled image, which originally had most likely represented a Turkish expedition in the Mediterranean Sea (Ferro et al., 1991, p. 294).

28. This, too, may have illustrated a German edition of the *Mundus Novus*, but likely it had a life of its own, as a work to be looked at rather than to be read. This is suggested by its size (34 x 21 cm), larger than the usual for a book's engraving, and by the fact that some watercolor copies of it exist. See Eames, 1922; Milbrath, 1989, pp. 188–190.

29. "This figure shows us the people and the island that has been discovered by the Christian king of Portugal, or by his subjects. The people are thus naked, handsome, nearly brown. Heads, necks, arms, private parts and the feet of men and women are

lightly covered with feathers. Men have also many precious stones in their face and chest. Nobody owns anything, but all things are in common. Men take for wives those who please them, be they mothers, sisters, or friends: they make no distinction. They fight with each other. They even eat each other, those who are slain, and hang the same flesh in the smoke. They can live for 150 years and have no form of government." All the information is found in the *Mundus Novus* (Vespucci, 1996b), except the feathered costumes, noted in the Letter to Soderini (1996a, pp. 349, 351).

30. Here de Bry published a Latin translation of the *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Bresil, autrement dite Amerique* [History of a trip made in the land of Brazil, otherwise known as America], by Jean de Léry (1578); the engraving illustrates chapter 9.

31. See Cervantes, 1994, pp. 5–39; Cervantes & Redden, 2013; Redden, 2008.

32. See Marco Simón, in this volume.

33. See Taviani, P.E., 1996/2000, pp. 49 and following.

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6

Cultural Persistence and Appropriation in the Huamantla Map

David Charles Wright-Carr

My goal in this chapter is to explore the processes of continuity and transformation in native culture in early colonial New Spain, using an exceptional cartographic and historical document painted by Otomi nobles in the town of Huamantla, on the eastern fringe of the province of Tlaxcala, during the last third of the sixteenth century. This exploration is meant to provide balance to the collective volume we have prepared on religious globalization in the context of empire, providing clues as to what these indigenous painter-authors were thinking, feeling, and doing about the attempts by Spanish colonists to transform the sophisticated worldview and belief system that had been developed by their ancestors since time immemorial.

While many contemporary documents from neighboring Indian towns exhibit stylistic influences from the European tradition, the *Huamantla Map*[1] is unusually conservative. The most obvious European influences are found in the subject matter of three scenes: the defeat of the Otomi of eastern Tlaxcala by Hernán Cortés in 1519, a Franciscan friar and convent, and a government official in European clothing standing next to an administrative building in Mexico City. These elements, however, are represented in the same indigenous style as depictions of events that occurred before the Spanish invasion. The use of alphabetic glosses in Nahuatl reveal the use by natives of this novel tool for registering verbal language, complementing and specifying some of the manuscript's rich pictorial content.

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c006

For context, I first provide an overview of the system of graphic communication shared by indigenous nobility throughout central Mexico at the time of the Spanish invasion, with emphasis on how the natives conceived of this visual language. Then a general description of the *Huamantla Map* is presented, examining the ways in which it reflects Mesoamerican culture, discussing its material, formal, and iconic aspects. While this document is fundamentally an expression of native culture and identity, the representations of Spanish authorities and the use of alphabetic glosses in Nahuatl provide a glimpse into how the Otomi nobility of eastern Tlaxcala viewed the newcomers from across the ocean, as well as the strategies they developed to adapt to their changing political and religious environment.

PAINTED LANGUAGE IN CENTRAL MEXICO

The native central Mexican[2] system of pictorial communication, when used to create orderly and sequential discourses, was essentially semasiographic; that is, its basic iconic units or graphs expressed ideas without being necessarily bound to linguistic structures. Nearly all of these visual signs were motivated (representational). Pictures of people, animals, plants, and things were preferred over arbitrary (abstract) signs. This system suited the plurilingual society of this region, just as in today's globalized society the icons of digital graphic user interfaces and road signs convey meaning over linguistic frontiers. Painted, engraved, sculpted, or modeled "texts" could be interpreted verbally in any of the languages spoken by the peoples that participated in a shared culture during the late pre-Hispanic and early colonial periods. This visual language, however, lent itself on occasion to glottography, in which motivated signs were used as rebus writing: depictions of people, animals, and things were used to express linguistic structures—words, morphemes, syllables, and phonemes—through homophonic or quasi-homophonic association.[3] Examples of glottography, invariably combined with semasiographic and iconic signs, have been identified in pre-Hispanic paintings and sculptures created by speakers of Nahuatl and Mixtec, as well as early colonial manuscripts produced by speakers of several languages, including Otomi (Wright-Carr, 2005a, Vol. 1, pp. 277–573; 2009c; 2019).

The Western categories of "iconography" and "writing" are inadequate to conceptualize central Mexican visual language from the late pre-Hispanic era. In colonial dictionaries that describe Mesoamerican languages, we often find the same native words glossed as both "writing" and "painting." This semantic unity is found in the two main languages of the central highlands of Mexico.

In Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, the word *tlahcuiloa* meant both "write" and "paint" (Karttunen, 1992, pp. 97, 261; Molina, 1571a, ff. 58r, 96r; 1571b, f. 26v). In Otomi, the same semantic category was expressed by the word *ofo* (Urbano, 1990, ff. 195v–197v, 337v).[4] In addition to these words there is a metaphorical couplet—*in tlīlli*, *in tlapalli* (Nahuatl) and *mayati nekuhu* (Otomi)—with three levels of meaning. Literally, these calqued phrases express the materials used in painting: "the black ink, the colored paint." On a metaphorical level, they evoke the images created by applying these materials to a surface. On a deeper metonymic level, they refer to the content of the paintings, expressing ancestral culture and wisdom (Wright-Carr, 2011). In the *Florentine Codex*, an alphabetic and pictorial manuscript, we find a variant of this couplet in a Nahuatl text:

> *Īntlīl, īntlapal in huēhuetqueh: inīn tlahtōlli, ītechpa mihtoāya: in īntlamanitiliz in huēhuetqueh, in tlein ōquitlālītēhuaqueh nemiliztli, zan īpan nemohua, ahcanozomō īpan nemohua: īc mihtoāya. Mācamō polihuiz in īntlīl, in īntlapal in huēhuetqueh: quihtōznequi: in tlamanitiliztli: ahnōzo. Tle īca in anquipoloa in nemiliztli, in īntlīl, in īntlapal tocōlhuān, huēhuetqueh?*
>
> [The black ink, the colored paint of the ancient ones. With this saying it was said: the law of the ancient ones, that which they laid down and took up, the way of life. One either lives by it or not; thus it was said. May the black ink, the colored paint of the ancient ones not disappear; it means the law; or: Why do you people destroy the way of life, the black ink, the colored paint, of our ancestors, the ancient ones?]. (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 2, ff. 217v–218r)[5]

The performative dimension of pre-Hispanic central Mexican manuscripts is often overlooked.[6] This, of course, depended on the genre. The "reading" of a tribute list or a receipt for goods and services was necessarily different from the public declamation of a historical document, which was sometimes accompanied by song, the playing of musical instruments, and dance. Dominican Friar Diego Durán (1967), writing in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, refers to the multimodal performance of oral declamation, music, and dance in indigenous central Mexican culture:

> *Preciábanse mucho los mozos de saber bien bailar y cantar y de ser guías de los demás en los bailes. Preciábanse de llevar los pies a son y de acudir a tiempo con el cuerpo a los meneos que ellos usan, y con la voz a su tiempo. Porque el baile de éstos no solamente se rige por el son, empero también por los altos y bajos, que el canto hace cantando y bailando conjuntamente. Para los cuales cantares había entre ellos poetas que los componían, dando a cada canto y baile diferente sonada, como nosotros usamos*

con nuestros cantos, dando al soneto y a la octava rima y al terceto sus diferentes sonadas para cantarlos

[The young men highly valued knowing how to dance and sing well, and how to lead others in dance. They valued moving their feet to the music, and in coming in on time with the bodily swaying that they do, and with the voice in its time, because their dance is not only governed by the music, but also by the high and low notes of the song, singing and dancing together. There were poets among them that composed these songs, giving a different sound to each song and dance, as we do in our songs, giving rhyme to the sonnet and the octave, and different tones to the tercet for their singing, and thus to the rest]. (Vol. 1, p. 192)

Durán links the declamation of historical and religious narrative to song and dance:

Muy ordinario era el bailar en los templos, pero era en las solemnidades, y mucho más ordinario era en las casas reales y de los señores, pues todos ellos tenían sus cantores que les componían cantares de las grandezas de sus antepasados y suyas. Especialmente a Moteuczoma, que es el señor de quien más noticia se tiene y de Nezahualpiltzintli de Tezcoco, les tenían compuestos en sus reinos cantares de sus grandezas y de sus victorias y vencimientos, y linajes, y de sus extrañas riquezas. Los cuales cantares he oído yo muchas veces cantar en bailes públicos, que aunque era conmemoración de sus señores, me dio mucho contento de oír tantas alabanzas y grandezas . . . Había otros cantores que componían cantares divinos de las grandezas y alabanzas de los dioses, y éstos estaban en los templos; los cuales, así los unos como los otros, tenían sus salarios, y a los cuales llamaban cuicapique, que quiere decir "componedores de cantos"

[It was usual for them to dance in the temples, but it was on solemn occasions, and much more often in the royal and lordly houses, since they all had their singers that composed songs about the greatness of their ancestors and of themselves. Especially for Moteuczoma, the lord about whom there is more news, and for Nezahualpiltzintli of Texcoco, they had composed in their kingdoms songs about their greatness, their victories and defeats, their lineages, and their extraordinary riches. I have heard the singing of these songs many times in public dances, and although this was done in commemoration of their lords, it gave me great pleasure to hear so many praises and great deeds. . . . There were other singers that composed sacred songs of the greatness and in praise of the gods, and these were in the temples; these singers, the former and the latter, had their salaries and were called *cuīcapiqueh*, which means "composers of songs"]. (Vol. 1, p. 195)

The lyrics of songs in Nahuatl are preserved in a few manuscripts from the sixteenth century. Some, although written in Nahuatl, are said to be *otoncuīcatl*, "songs of the Otomi." This suggests that both language groups participated in the same performative tradition (*Cantares Mexicanos*, 1994, ff. 2r, 3r, 4v). The following verse expresses the multimodal interdependence of painted writing, song, and instrumental music:

> *Nicuīcanitl tiħuēħuehtqueh āc yehħuātl ye compōħuaz ītlaħtōl īcēlteōtl in īāmox in ītlaħcuilōl in cuīcatl ħuēħuētl teponāztl āyacachtli tetzilacatl āyōtl ye chicāħuaztli cuepōnqui cozaħuic xōchitl cāħuilia xōchitl tl[āltic]p[a]c cān tonyāz cān taħciz cān tinemiz*
>
> [I am the singer; we are the old ones. Who will still read the words of the one God, his book, his painted writing, his song, his skin-covered drum, his two-tongued drum, his rattle, his copper bell, his turtle shell, even his rattle stick? The yellow flowers open their corollas. He brings flowers for the face of the Earth. Where will you go? How far will you go? Where will you live?]. (f. 15r–v)

In another example from the same source, a "book of song" is mentioned and the verbalization of visual language is emphasized. The phrase "flower water" appears to be a reference to the role of flowers—among other plant, animal, and mineral sources—in the preparation of pigments and binders.[7] The use of flowers in the painted writing of the Mesoamericans is today only partly understood. Beyond their chromatic and adhesive properties, flowers were part of a symbolic system that emerged from a millennial tradition of human interaction with the world of plants.[8]

> *In noncuīcaāmoxtlapal ya noconyazozouħtinemi nixōchiālotzin nontlatetoħticaħ in tlaħcuilōlcaliħtic ca. In quēnman onnemiz niquittoa in nontlatlatetoħticaħ in tlaħcuilōlcaliħtic a*
>
> [As always, I extend my colors in the book of song. I am the one who is perfumed with flower water. I am talking a lot in the house of painted writing, *ca*! That which I say will someday live. I am talking a very lot in the house of painted writing, *aħ*!]. (f. 51v)[9]

Another verse, again from the *Cantares Mexicanos* manuscript, evokes the image of a patio where a painted book and a drum are essential elements in the creative act of composing a song:

> *Niyanoquetzacoya xōchithuallaiħtic ayaħue āmoxtlin cuepōni ye noħuēħuēuh ħuiya cuīcatl notlaħtōl aya xōchitl in notlayōcol in noconyachīħua i noconyachiya nicān*

yehhuan Dios aya auh nōhuiyān chiyālōn tlālticpac ye nicān ohuaya ohuaya

[I come, *ya*, to stand, *ya*, in the flowery patio, *ayawe*. The book is still blooming. My skin-covered drum, *wiya*, the song, my flowery words, *aya*. I compose, *ya*, my creation. I wait for God, *ya*, here and everywhere on the face of the Earth. He is still awaited here, *owaya owaya*]. (f. 19v)

As we have seen, colonial sources provide tantalizing hints of how the contents of central Mexican pictorial manuscripts were performed. Further research is needed to understand the social significance and the aesthetic dimension of these painted books, the visual language of which transcends the mere codification of verbal discourse.

European presence in central Mexico affected the production of indigenous manuscripts. The Mesoamerican tradition of visual language was gradually eclipsed by the European traditions of painting and writing. Manuscripts painted by natives during the colonial era exhibit a blend of styles, reflecting the interaction of indigenous peoples with European immigrants. This blending is manifest in supports and pigments, format and composition, pictorial styles, the introduction of the Latin alphabet, discursive content, and the ways in which texts were read or performed (Glass, 1964; Glass & Robertson, 1975).

THE *HUAMANTLA MAP*

Available evidence, both historical and intrinsic, points to an origin of the *Huamantla Map* in the last third of the sixteenth century, in the eponymous Otomi town, next to the eastern slope of the volcano called today La Malinche. Huamantla was located on the eastern border of the territory controlled by the Tlaxcalan confederacy before the arrival of Hernán Cortés. After the transition to Spanish rule it was under the jurisdiction of the native town council of Tlaxcala. This extraordinary pictorial manuscript was painted when Huamantla was consolidating its status as a regional capital, eclipsing local power centers such as Tecoac, which had dominated eastern Tlaxcala before its defeat by Cortés. Huamantla's emergence was due, in part, to the founding there of a Franciscan convent, following official approval in 1567 (Gibson, 1967; Wright-Carr, 2005a, Vol. 1, pp. 17–275, 431–573; 2010).

The *Huamantla Map* was painted on a large rectangle of paper made from the inner bark of ficus trees (Huerta Carrillo & Berthier Villaseñor, 2001; Wiedemann & Boller, 1996). When painted it measured approximately 7.0 by 1.9 meters and was made by joining several smaller pieces. Today nine

fragments survive, seven in Mexico City and two in Berlin (*Huamantla Map*, ca. 1567–1598a–i).[10] On this surface, without the white ground found on many pre-Hispanic codices, native visual language was employed to depict a portion of the central highlands of Mexico extending from the mountains northwest of Mexico City to the region east of La Malinche volcano in the modern states of Tlaxcala and Puebla. Within this cartographic structure, outstanding events from the historical memory of the Otomi nobility of Huamantla were inserted. Geographic space is the dominant organizing principle, with events placed at or near the places they occurred. This produces some apparently anachronistic juxtapositions, as depictions of events from different periods coexist in specific cartographic settings.[11] While the primary form of expression in this document is a regional variety of native central Mexican visual language, complementary verbal information in Nahuatl is provided in the thirty-two surviving alphabetic glosses distributed throughout the manuscript.[12]

To experience directly the bodily affordances provided by the *Huamantla Map*,[13] I constructed a full-scale facsimile, gluing photographic reproductions published in book format by Aguilera (1984) to large sheets of bark paper manufactured by Otomi paper makers in the mountain town of San Pablito Pahuatlán, Puebla. When this cartographic and historical document is laid out on a floor, the viewer can see clearly that not all the painted signs have the same orientation. There is something to be seen right-side-up from each of its four sides. Most of the main sign complexes, however, may be contemplated with their proper orientation from a vantage point on the northwestern edge of the manuscript, where the story begins with the emergence of ancestors from a sacred cave (figure 6.1).[14]

A narrative sequence is superimposed on the cartographic space by paths of painted footprints, indicating movement through the landscape and through time. These paths lead from the primordial cave to Teotihuacan—identified by two grey temple platforms, the color indicating their ruinous condition—where the first rising of the Fifth Sun, following the self-sacrifice of Nanahuatzin in a sacred bonfire, is depicted (figure 6.2).[15] From here, a path leads into more recent historical time. The Valley of Mexico is left behind as the footprints enter the territory controlled by the Tlaxcalan confederacy, whose rulers during the last century of the pre-Hispanic era successfully fended off the imperial armies of the Aztec Triple Alliance of Mexico: Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan.

The hostile border between the territories controlled by the Triple Alliance and the Tlaxcalan confederacy is represented by intertwined bands of water and cultivated fields in flames, a visual expression of the couplet *teōātl tlahchinōlli*, a Nahuatl phrase meaning literally "the divine water, the burning fields," a

Figure 6.1. *The primordial cave. Detail, fragment 6 of the* Huamantla Map. *Drawing by Stephanie Constantino Vega.*

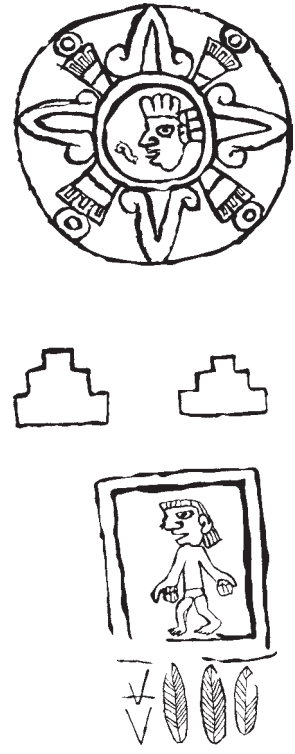

Figure 6.2. *The transformation of Nanahuatzin into the Fifth Sun at Teotihuacan. Detail, fragment 1 of the* Huamantla Map. *Drawing by Stephanie Constantino Vega.*

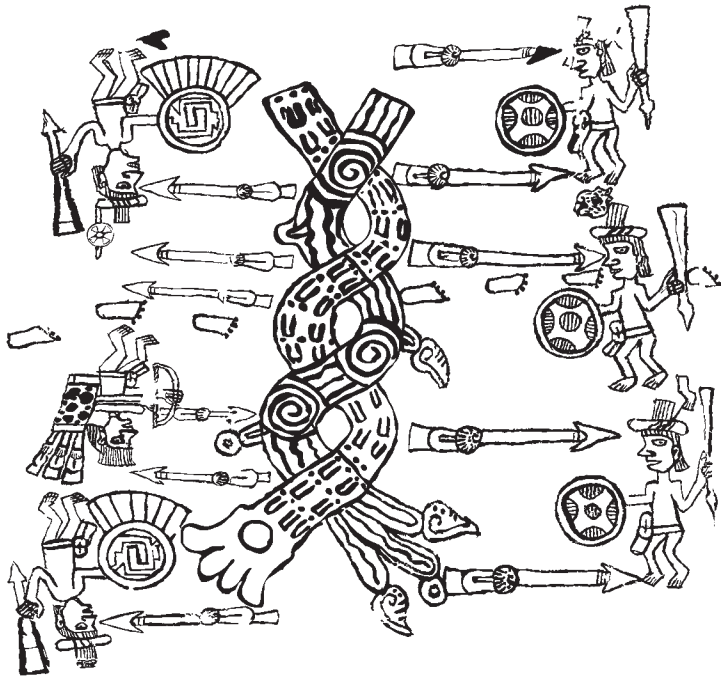

Figure 6.3. *"Divine water, burning fields": a martial metaphor. Detail, fragment 5 of the* Huamantla Map. *Drawing by Stephanie Constantino Vega.*

metaphor for war; similar phrases exist in Otomi (Wright-Carr, 2012b). Warriors on opposite sides of these martial sign clusters do battle, armed with bows, arrows, shields, and war sticks edged with razor-sharp obsidian blades (figure 6.3). The southeastern half of the *Huamantla Map* represents the territory of the Tlaxcalan confederacy. The portion depicting its political core, where the dominant kingdoms of Tlaxcala were concentrated, is now lost.[16] This is unfortunate, as Huamantla formed part of the colonial period province of Tlaxcala, and it would have been interesting, to say the least, to see how they depicted this important native polity.

The remaining fragments depict Huamantla at the center of a large rectangular space, expressing the prominence of this Otomi town in the late sixteenth century. In this portion of the document, emphasis is placed on warfare, the taking of captives for human sacrifice, and political structures, combining information concerning both late pre-Hispanic and colonial periods.[17] Two sixteenth-century historical events are prominently featured: the defeat of the

Figure 6.4. *Mexico City and Mexico Tenochtitlan. Detail, fragment 2 of the* Huamantla Map. *Drawing by Stephanie Constantino Vega.*

Otomi warriors of Tecoac by the Spanish forces led by Cortés in 1519, when the Spaniards first marched from Veracruz to Mexico Tenochtitlan, and the founding of a Franciscan convent in Huamantla. In the portion representing the Valley of Mexico,[18] a depiction of a man with European clothing was painted next to an architectural representation, probably a government palace, showing that the former Aztec capital of Mexico Tenochtitlan had become Mexico City, the seat of Spanish imperial power (figure 6.4).[19]

EXPRESSIONS OF MESOAMERICAN CULTURE

Having examined the nature of the central Mexican system of visual communication, taking native-language sources into account, and having provided

a brief description of the *Huamantla Map*, we may now look for evidence of cultural persistence and appropriation in this pictorial manuscript.

The composition of graphic signs in a coherently structured visual narrative reflects native tradition, although the lack of surviving cartographic manuscripts painted before the arrival of the Spanish colonists complicates the task of separating European and Mesoamerican traditions.[20] Surviving maps, produced by native painters in New Spain, share conventions with the *Huamantla Map*, including signs for rivers, mountains, and paths, many of which have parallels in pre-Hispanic documents in the historical genre. In early colonial cartographic manuscripts we find several instances of the compositional device by which a featured kingdom is placed at the center of a rectangular space delimited with secondary place signs, thus depicting a territorial jurisdiction.[21] A careful study of this document reveals a narrative intent, superimposing a story of primordial origins and migration, indicated by paths of footprints as discussed above, from an ancestral homeland to the Otomi town of Huamantla, beginning in the mountains to the northwest, crossing the northern Valley of Mexico and northern Tlaxcala. This establishes a northwest to southeast axis running the length of the manuscript. Another pattern of movement through cartographic space is defined by meandering trails of red brushstrokes, representing blood, leading from the battle zones—marked by "divine water, burning fields" sign clusters—and extending in several directions. These trails of blood culminate in scenes of warriors grasping pale (drained of blood) captives by the hair, depictions of the presentation of these captives to native authorities or priests, and in one case a representation of human sacrifice by heart extraction. None of these features show borrowing from the European cartographic or pictorial traditions. Similar signs are found in pre-Hispanic painting and sculpture (Leibsohn, 1995, 2000; Mundy, 1996; Russo, 2005).

Most painted signs in the *Huamantla Map* are clearly derived from the pre-Hispanic tradition. These may be assigned to the following categories: cultural, representing manufactured objects (233 signs); anthropomorphic (152); phytomorphic (84); architectonic (63); anthroponymic, including calendrical signs, as people were named for their birth dates in the 260-day mantic cycle (49); toponymic (38); metaphoric (32); zoomorphic (30); geographic (14); deimorphic (7); and astral (1); plus one sign that could not be identified, for a total of 704 signs. Of these, 686 were classified as motivated (representational); 10 were classified as "intermediate," due to their high degree of stylization; only one was classified as arbitrary (abstract); and 7 were left unclassified, due to doubts about their significance. Regarding the possible association of these signs with linguistic structures, 689 of them—97.87 percent—are clearly semasiographic

and could be verbalized in Otomi, Nahuatl, or any other language spoken in central Mexico. None was securely identified as glottographic, but fifteen were left unclassified, eight of these because it was impossible to determine what they represented, and seven because there are reasonable hypotheses regarding their possible links to verbal elements in either Otomi or Nahuatl.[22] These figures are consistent with other native pictorial manuscripts, as this graphic communication system was essentially semasiographic and highly motivated, while lending itself to an occasional glottographic sign, as noted above.

The formal aspects of the painted signs in this manuscript are also firmly within the central Mexican pictorial tradition. The most notorious deviations from the pre-Hispanic canon are probably the consequence of the slackening of the high technical standards found in the few surviving pre-Hispanic manuscripts. This reflects social changes resulting from the imposition of Spanish rule, including the dismantling of schools associated with indigenous temples and priests, in the context of the suppression of native religion and ideology by ecclesiastical authorities. Despite the origin of this manuscript two generations after the destruction of Mexico Tenochtitlan, stylistic influences from the European pictorial tradition are extremely rare, thus revealing the cultural tenacity of the Otomi nobles of Huamantla.

The historical narrative expressed in the painted signs of the *Huamantla Map* reflects pre-Hispanic tradition. The story is grounded in a primordial past, with episodes including the emergence of ancestors from a sacred cave at the beginning of time and the birth of the Fifth Sun at Teotihuacan, a powerful metropolis that had collapsed nearly a millennium before the arrival of the Spaniards. A migratory path ties these events to the more recent history of the lords of Huamantla, inserting political and dynastic history into a wider symbolic and mythical system based on a shared Mesoamerican worldview, legitimizing the power of the ruling class and emphasizing bonds with neighboring peoples (Boone, 2000, pp. 18–20, 238–245; Florescano, 1999; Marcus, 1992, pp. 142–152). This narrative was extended to encompass the events following the arrival of conquistadors and friars, and these events were integrated seamlessly into the pre-Hispanic narrative.

The representation of pre-Hispanic deities and scenes of human sacrifice is unusual in manuscripts painted during the late sixteenth century, since the production and possession of such images was punishable by public humiliation, flagellation, banishment, incarceration, or death.[23] In other manuscripts of this period we find representations of native deities and depictions of rituals and sacrifices, but most of these were painted as "ethnographic" texts, used as instruments in the campaign to suppress native religion and to convert

the population to the Catholic faith. With this in mind, the religious content of the *Huamantla Map* is noteworthy, since this manuscript clearly had a very different function, which was to serve as a visual manifestation of native history legitimizing the emergence of Huamantla as a regional capital and reaffirming native identity through the continued use of traditional signs and symbols. This is not an isolated case; there are other examples of ideological resistance reflected in paintings and sculptures intended for public display among the Otomi of central Mexico.[24]

At the northwestern edge of the map, deities in human form occupy the primordial cave: a telluric goddess, holding a shield, faces an igneous male deity holding a projectile and a flower (figure 6.1). Together, they represent Old Mother and Old Father, cosmic progenitors and sacred ancestors. Another male deity operates a fire drill, setting the calendar in motion with a New Fire ritual. A fourth deity, with vertical red and yellow bands painted on his face, holds a military banner.[25] In another scene, depicting the origin of the Fifth Sun at Teotihuacan, the sore-covered numen called Nanahuatzin [revered pustulant one], is shown roasting in the fire pit into which he has thrown himself (figure 6.2). An offering of precious feathers and bloodied self-sacrificial spines is depicted, while a nearby solar disk with a human face shows the transformation of Nanahuatzin into the Sun. Here visual discourse evokes more elaborate oral narratives, versions of which survive in alphabetic manuscripts from the early colonial period.[26]

On another fragment, originally the south central portion of the map, we find a pictorial representation of the Valley of Mexico. The southern part of the valley lies beyond the edge of the manuscript, while the western portion was probably included in a section of the map that is no longer extant. Pictorial elements refer to places in the central and northern Valley of Mexico: (1) Teotihuacan, with a scene of the emergence of the Fifth Sun from the sacred bonfire; (2) the Acolhuacan region, governed by the kingdom of Texcoco, a member of the Triple Alliance, identified by a curved water sign and an architectural structure with a nobleman sitting on a bench and holding a flower, identified by an anthroponymic sign (probably a lineage founder); and (3) a circular water sign, almost closed, depicting an island with an opuntia cactus and a deity with facial paint whose identity is not clear due to the paucity of iconographic attributes, seated on a bench and holding a magic looking device called *tlachiyalōni*, an instrument associated with certain gods and the people that personified them (figure 6.4). This sign complex represents Mexico Tenochtitlan, the dominant kingdom of the valley of Mexico. This name is adapted from the Nahuatl toponym

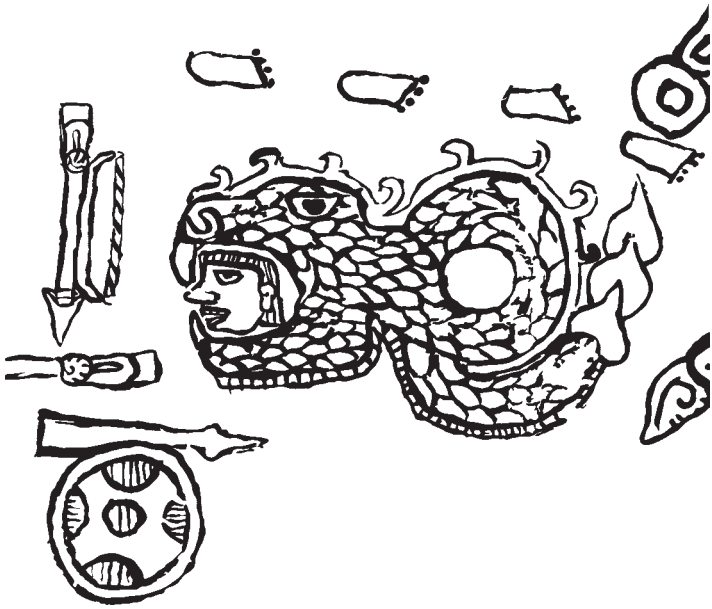

Figure 6.5. *Cihuacoatl, a manifestation of the Earth Mother. Detail, fragment 5 of the* Huamantla Map. *Drawing by Stephanie Constantino Vega.*

Mēxxihco Tenōchtitlan [in the navel of the Moon, next to the stone prickly-pears] (Wright-Carr, 2016a, pp. 117–118).

Near the western border of the territory controlled by Tlaxcala, a rattlesnake with cloud scrolls is depicted, a woman's head emerging from its open mouth (figure 6.5). This represents Cihuacoatl, "snake woman," a pre-Hispanic maternal goddess,[27] associated here with a scene of human sacrifice performed by tying a man to a wooden frame and shooting arrows at him to spill his blood upon the Earth.

One of the defining elements of Mesoamerican culture is the 260-day mantic calendar, combining twenty named days with the numbers one to thirteen. This cycle intermeshed with others, such as the series of nine lords of the night, thirteen lords of the day, and thirteen flying creatures (twelve birds and one butterfly), all of these associated with omens. This complex chronological system charged each day with positive and negative potential, determining the destiny of events and people. The study of calendrical terms in pictorial manuscripts, and in alphabetic documents written in Nahuatl and Otomi, reveals that the speakers of both languages shared what was essentially the

same calendar and thought about time in the same symbolic terms (Wright-Carr, 2009a). Two pictorial codices from central Mexico express the 260-day calendar in a similar graphic format, with twenty pages representing thirteen-day periods: the *Codex Borbonicus* (Anders, Jansen, & Reyes, 1991), apparently painted by Nahuatl-speakers in the Valley of Mexico during the early sixteenth century, and the *Aubin Tonalamatl* (2018), whose origin can be traced, on historical and stylistic grounds, to the Otomi of Huamantla during the late sixteenth century.[28] The creation of a pictorial expression of the 260-day calendar, complete with pre-Hispanic deities, shows that at least some of the Otomi of the eastern province of Tlaxcala were actively conserving and practicing their ancestral religion decades after the fall of Mexico Tenochtitlan, in spite of the intense campaign of cultural imposition carried out by the Spanish government and the Catholic Church.[29] The phenomenon called "the conquest" in traditional historiography was more of an intent than an event, a process that continues today as indigenous peoples defend their territories, lifestyles, languages, and ethnic identity.[30]

In the *Huamantla Map* there are 49 anthroponymic signs. Twenty-one of these apparently represent named days in the 20-day cycle, and 13 of the 20 possible day names are present. Twenty-six represent alternative forms of naming people. Given names were used, in addition to calendrical names, in pre-Hispanic and early colonial central Mexico, including names designating animals, plants, architecture, and cultural objects. Two signs remain unidentified. In only one case do we find a pictorial anthroponym composed of a numeral together with one of the 20 day signs: the number three, represented by three circles, painted under the head of a mammal, either a rabbit or a dog (both animals had their places among the 20 day signs of the mantic calendar). The use of day signs without numerals may indicate an early stage in the transformation of naming practices among the Otomi.

The *Huamantla Map* may thus be seen as a visual statement of political legitimacy, indigenous identity, and ideological resistance, in response to attempts by the Spanish government and the Catholic Church to impose European culture throughout their newly acquired domains. We do not have written accounts describing the use of this manuscript in specific social contexts. It is likely that it was displayed on formal occasions, when native governors met to negotiate matters like territorial rights, the administration of tribute, and strategic alliances through matrimony, since the manuscript includes historical, territorial, and dynastic content, presenting the Huamantla nobility in a broader geographic and temporal context. It may have been displayed in the presence of Spaniards, but the depictions of ancestral deities and human

sacrifice would have made this risky, both for the document and the people associated with it. At some moment it was buried in a box in the ruins of a chapel in Huamantla, according to Lorenzo Boturini, a nobleman from Milan who acquired it around 1740 (Boturini Benaduci, 1746/1999, Pt. 2, pp. 38–39).[31]

Boturini's collection of indigenous manuscripts was confiscated by colonial authorities in 1743 and kept in various institutions in Mexico City, suffering gradual losses as documents passed into private collections. By this time native resistance had assumed new forms, adapting to an evolving social context, and the *Huamantla Map* came to be seen as an object of antiquarian curiosity.[32] Baron Alexander von Humboldt acquired two fragments of this manuscript in 1803 in Mexico City; today these are held by the State Library of Berlin. The remaining fragments are conserved in the National Library of Anthropology and History in Mexico City (Wright-Carr, 2005a, Vol. 1, pp. 369, 437–446).

REFLECTIONS OF EUROPEAN CULTURE

As seen in the preceding section, the *Huamantla Map* expresses traditional central Mexican culture and worldview through its materials, composition, formal aspects, and content. This is significant, considering that it was painted during the final third of the sixteenth century, several decades after the fall of Mexico Tenochtitlan. There are, as should be expected, reflections of the new social order, although these are outshone by the native traits that permeate the manuscript.

European alphabetic script, which permits the relatively precise representation of oral discourse on material surfaces, was introduced by Spanish colonists. It was taught to the children of the indigenous ruling class by friars, who shut down native schools and indoctrinated these children in schools within the cloisters, forming a new generation of bicultural, plurilingual, Christianized natives to govern their towns. The transition from the traditional ruling dynasties to town councils based on the Spanish *ayuntamiento* [town council] system took place gradually, during the first century of colonial rule. Alphabetic writing spread with Spanish control. This novel form of graphic communication was adopted throughout New Spain and was used, together with traditional Mesoamerican pictorial language, as a tool in the negotiation of power between indigenous town councils and Spanish authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical (Wright-Carr, 2009b).

Most of the alphabetic glosses in the *Huamantla Map* were executed with an extremely fine pen in light brown ink. They are barely visible, even when viewing the original manuscript. One lone gloss, painted under the scene depicting

the victory of Cortés, stands out for its large size and the use of brush rather than pen. Thirty-two glosses are visible today. Of these, ten are legible, fifteen partially legible, and seven illegible. They were added after the pictorial signs and before the acquisition of the manuscript by Boturini. The calligraphy suggests they were written in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. Boturini transcribed eighteen toponymic glosses and published them in 1746; of these, ten are still legible (Wright-Carr, 2005a, Vol. 1, pp. 450–453; Vol. 2, pp. 245–251; 2016a, pp. 385–396).

One gloss identifies an anthroponymic painted sign as a beetle, called *pīnāhuiztli* in Nahuatl, that was interpreted as an omen (Wright-Carr, 2016a, p. 388).[33] Two glosses name the secondary deities represented within the primordial cave described above: "*Xuchiltonal*" [day Flower, flowery day, flowery summer, flowery Sun, or flowery solar heat]; and "*Chicuey Ytzcuintli*" [Eight Dog], a day in the 260-day mantic calendar (Wright-Carr, 2016a, p. 393).

Two longer glosses explain the meaning of the sign complexes, found throughout the map, depicting men seated on benches and holding flowers in front of architectural signs: "*Auh nicah zacateotlah yn toconcol yntocah ocenllotli*" [And here is Zacateotlan (Place of the Grass God); the name of our ancestor is Ocelotl (Jaguar/Ocelot)] and "*Nica yahualyohca yntoca cuitli [?] yn toconcol*" [Here is Yahualyocan (round place); the name of our ancestor is Cuixtli (Hawk)] (Wright-Carr, 2016a, pp. 394–396). These glosses suggest that certain architectural forms, depicted throughout the map, represent administrative buildings, and that the figures seated in front of them depict lineage founders.

Two additional glosses provide clues for the interpretation of the manuscript's content. Within the primordial cave we find the words "*Nicah toquizyahnoztoc*" [Here, inside the cave, the place (or time) of our emergence]. The large gloss painted with a brush under the scene of the victory of Cortés is important because it provides a *terminus ante quem*, a latest possible date, for the painting of the manuscript. It states that the Marquis (Cortés) arrived over seventy years ago; the illegible ending of the number gives us a possible range of seventy-one to seventy-nine years. The arrival of Cortés in the eastern province of Tlaxcala occurred in 1519, so the latest possible date for the gloss, which is evidently later than the pictorial signs, is between 1590 and 1598. The *terminus post quem* [earliest possible date] is indicated by the depiction of the Franciscan convent of Huamantla; its founding was authorized in 1567, three years after a formal request submitted to the Franciscans; construction began two years later (Gibson, 1967, p. 48; Wright-Carr, 2014, 2016a, pp. 391–392).

These glosses probably aided—and continue to aid—in the identification of the painted signs, most of which do not directly codify spoken language. Rather,

the pictorial language provides a general framework over which a verbal discourse could be constructed, probably enhanced with music and dance, on formal occasions when the history of the lords of Huamantla was performed. The *Huamantla Map* could have been performed in Otomi, Nahuatl, or any other language spoken in central Mexico.[34] The use of Nahuatl in the glosses suggests the negotiation of power between the Otomi lords of Huamantla and the Nahuatl-speaking nobles of the central nucleus of the province, where the city of Tlaxcala was founded. Nahuatl also served as a lingua franca for communicating with Spanish officials and clergy, with or without the mediation of translators.[35]

As mentioned above, the most obvious reflections of European culture found in the *Huamantla Map* are representations of Spaniards, inserted into the cartographic space near the places where their deeds were enacted. This occurs in three instances: a massacre of natives by Spanish horsemen, a depiction of what are probably meant to be interpreted as a Spanish governor and his palace in Mexico City, and the representation of a friar and a convent in Huamantla.

A large area in the north central portion of this map is dedicated to a scene depicting the military victory of Cortés over the Otomi warriors from Tecoac that put the Spaniards to the test on their initial march from Veracruz to Mexico Tenochtitlan (Wright, 2020, p. 288, figure 5). Cortés is depicted in fine clothing, standing atop a mountain sign including a decapitated native within its contour. Seven additional decapitated Indians are represented to the sides of the mountain, while two mounted conquistadors behead natives with their pikes. Four indigenous women present Cortés with vessels of water, while five men offer turkeys, bales of forage, and strings of jade beads. Above this scene more presents are depicted: turkeys, another bale of forage, and containers with white oval-shaped objects, perhaps turkey eggs or tortillas. This pictorial representation corresponds closely to verbal histories found in sixteenth-century chronicles written by Spanish and indigenous authors. The correspondence between the pictorial and verbal narratives is particularly evident in the native account of the Spanish invasion in book 12 of the *Florentine Codex* (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 3, ff. 421v–422v [12.10]).[36]

The second section in which a Spaniard is represented is next to the sign cluster representing Mexico Tenochtitlan, discussed above. Here is depicted a man in European clothing, hand extended, standing in front of an architectural structure (figure 6.4). The man and the building are painted in black ink, without the colors found in most signs of this manuscript. By analogy with the the building-man-bench-flower sign clusters, the European probably

represents Hernán Cortés or a viceroy, and the building is likely the palace erected by Cortés and his viceregal successors over the rubble of the palace of Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin, the Mexica king that ruled when Cortés first arrived at Mexico Tenochtitlan. Thus the Spanish capital of Mexico City is depicted adjacent to the sign cluster representing the Aztec capital, pictorially representing two successive centers of power at the same location.

The center of the southeastern portion of the *Huamantla Map* is visually dominated by a large compound toponymic sign, representing a stylized mountain with three trees on its summit and two agave cacti, a deer, and a snake in its interior. This sign cluster stands for Huamantla, a Castilian loanword from the Nahuatl toponym *Cuauhmāntlān*, "near the forest." An alphabetic gloss spells out the Nahuatl name, in the rustic variant used by the author of the glosses, who probably spoke Otomi as a first language: "*quamantla*." Several elements complete the depiction of the town of Huamantla: architectural structures with men on benches holding flowers, probably representing second-rank sociopolitical structures called *calpōlli* in Nahuatl, *andanguetsofo* in Otomi, and *barrios* in Castilian (Wright-Carr, 2008b), with their lineage founders; a cultivated field with a farmer; regional flora and fauna; and an abbreviated depiction of the Franciscan convent of San Luis at Huamantla: a religious building with a cross framed by an arch, probably representing the open-air chapel that served as a church in the last decades of the sixteenth century, prior to the completion of the church; another structure representing the cloister; and a barefoot friar with a grey habit and waist cord, standing between the chapel and the cloister with extended hands. It is possible, as noted by Carmen Aguilera, that the latter depiction represents Friar Pedro Meléndez, who directed the construction of the convent beginning in 1569 (Aguilera, 1984, pp. 15–16; see also Gibson, 1967, p. 48). The use of grey bands that only partially fill the black outlines, leaving parallel bands showing the light color of the bark paper, may be seen in the cultivated field and in the friar's habit. These may be timid attempts at imitating the shading that characterized European art of the late Gothic and Renaissance periods, a stylistic trait that was absent from pre-Hispanic manuscripts. In general the pictorial style of this map is extremely conservative, considering the date of its production.

Through the depictions of Cortés and his horsemen, the Spanish governor in Mexico City, and the Franciscan friar and convent in Huamantla, care was taken to acknowledge the new political and religious order. Thus, the history of the lords of Huamantla was traced back to the primordial origins of the cosmos, continuing through the late pre-Hispanic era, and including the early colonial period, when Huamantla emerged as a regional capital.

CONCLUSION

The extraordinary scale of this map afforded the experience of looking out over a vast landscape, as if from a mountain top. There is a primary observation point on the northwestern edge of the map, from which the viewer looks into the primordial cave and beyond, across the Valley of Mexico and the province of Tlaxcala, with Huamantla and its surrounding landscape in the distance. This indicates a starting point for interaction with the manuscript. The fact that some signs clusters have distinct orientations strongly suggests movement around the map's perimeter by painters, during execution, and performers, during performances. We have seen how song, instrumental music, and dance often accompanied the "reading" of central Mexican historical manuscripts. It is not difficult to imagine such a scenario when the *Huamantla Map* was laid out and people gathered around to see and hear performances of the history of this Otomi town.

The production of the *Huamantla Map* in the context of the repression of native culture by European colonists is itself a noteworthy act of ideological resistance and cultural tenacity, as well as a statement of political power. By the time the manuscript was painted, aspects of European culture had penetrated the indigenous towns of central Mexico. Nonetheless, one can observe how the authors of this pictorial manuscript expressed and preserved noteworthy features of their ancestral culture, while acknowledging the presence and authority of the Spanish government and the Catholic Church. The Otomi lords of Huamantla pictorially asserted their privileged status, tracing their lineage back to the beginning of time. They laid claim to the territory their forefathers had defended with arms before the coming of the Europeans. The defeat of Tecoac by Cortés, prominently displayed, opened up the possibility of a shift in the dynamics of regional politics. The authors proclaimed Huamantla's status as a regional capital, highlighting the presence of a Franciscan convent in their town. Traditional visual language continued to serve the needs of the native community in a changing social, political, and religious environment.

NOTES

1. This manuscript is usually called the *Codex of Huamantla* (*Códice de Huamantla* in Castilian), but this title is misleading, since the word "codex" implies a book or book-like format, with content divided among folios. Mesoamerican manuscripts with formats analogous to that of the *Huamantla Map* are often called *lienzos* [sheets of cloth] or *mapas* [maps], when painted on bark paper or European cotton paper. See Glass, 1964; Glass & Robertson, 1975.

2. The phrase "central Mexico" refers here to the central highlands, Oaxaca, and the Gulf Coast; this covers most of Mesoamerica, excluding the Maya region and most of western Mexico. In central Mexico, native nobility used a relatively homogenous system of visual communication during the late pre-Hispanic and early colonial periods.

3. Regarding these concepts—semasiography, glottography, motivated graphs, and arbitrary graphs—see Sampson, 2015; Wright-Carr, 2019. The first of these, semasiography, is underutilized in Mesoamerican studies. For a noteworthy exception, where this term is used as part of a tightly structured theoretical and conceptual framework, see Mikulska, 2015.

4. This is also the case in Tarascan (Gilberti, 1990, ff. 83v, 140r), Yucatecan (Barrera Vásquez, 1995, p. 882), Pocomam (Smith Stark, 1994, table 1), Zapotec (Córdova, 1987, ff. 182v, 315v), Mixtec (Alvarado, 1962, ff. 102r–v, 168r), and Pipil (Smith Stark, 1994, table 1).

5. For a morphological analysis and Castilian translation of this fragment, see Wright-Carr, 2016a, pp. 376–381.

6. For exceptions, see Boone, 1994, pp. 71–72; Gingerich, 1998; Johansson K., 2000, p. 143; Monaghan, 1990, 1994; Pohl, 1994, pp. 12–13; 2001, Pt. 1, pp. 5–6.

7. On the use of flowers in painting, see Baglioni et al., 2011, pp. 82–102; Magaloni Kerpel, 2011, pp. 57–66; Reyes Equiguas, 2011; Zetina et al., 2011.

8. See Magaloni Kerpel, 2011, p. 65.

9. In the English translation of this and the following verses, I have tried to give an idea—albeit imperfect—of their musicality by including the syllables—marked here with italics—that provided rhythm and sonority in Nahuatl songs.

10. See *Codex of Huamantla* (2018) for a partial digital facsimile (neither the Berlin fragments nor fragment 9 are included). Aguilera (1984) published an important study, together with a facsimile in which the pictorial content was extracted and reorganized in book format. In addition to providing high-resolution color reproductions, Aguilera proposed a hypothetical but generally convincing reconstruction of the spatial arrangement of the surviving fragments.

11. For a description of the *Huamantla Map* with a review of published sources, see Wright-Carr, 2005a, Vol. 1, pp. 433–478.

12. The glosses are transcribed, analyzed, and translated in Wright-Carr, 2016a, pp. 385–396.

13. For an analysis of the *Huamantla Map* from the theoretical perspective of embodied cognitive science, exploring this manuscript's potential for bodily interaction and as a tool for cognitive extension, see Wright-Carr, 2020.

14. A photograph of the collage on amate paper can be seen in Wright-Carr, 2010, fig. 1. Figures 6.1–6.3 are reprinted from Wright-Carr, 2016b. Figures 6.4 and 6.5 were prepared for this chapter.

15. Regarding the creation of the Fifth Sun, see Marco Simón and Pérez Yarza, in this volume.

16. I use the word "kingdom" loosely here, as the best available approximation in English to the Nahuatl concept *ālтepētl* (equivalent to the Otomi *andehent'ǫ̂hǫ*). For a detailed analysis of words in Nahuatl and Otomi for social structures, see Wright-Carr, 2008b.

17. On human sacrifice in Mesoamerica and the ways it was perceived and interpreted by Europeans, see Marco Simón, in this volume.

18. For a high-resolution digital facsimile including the section representing Mexico–Tenochtitlan/Mexico City, see *Codex of Huamantla* (2018). Drawings of sign clusters found in this section may be seen in Wright-Carr, 2020, pp. 287 (fig. 3), 290 (fig. 6).

19. The narrative aspect of the *Huamantla Map* is explored in Wright-Carr, 2008a. For an overview of the historical dimension of this Otomi manuscript, see Wright-Carr, 2010. The history of the Franciscan convent in Huamantla, with particular attention to indigenous historical manuscripts, is discussed in Wright-Carr, 2014.

20. There are references to pre-Hispanic maps in texts from the colonial period. Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1632/2001, f. 89r), for example, describes how Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin, ruler of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, provided Hernán Cortés with a map "on a sheet of henequin cloth, with all the rivers and coves that were on the northern coast from Pánuco to Tabasco, painted and indicated in a very natural manner."

21. There is a wealth of cartographic and cartographic-historical material produced by native painters in the early colonial period. Notable examples are the maps of Cuauhtinchan, painted in a town near Huamantla. See Carrasco & Sessions, 2007; Galarza & Yoneda, 1979; Glass, 1964, pp. 66, 76–77, 123, plates 25, 34, 73; Simons, 1968; Yoneda, 1981, 1994, 1999, 2005.

22. For an explanation of these classifications and a catalog of graphic signs in the *Huamantla Map*, see Wright-Carr, 2005a, Vol. 1, pp. 467–478; Vol. 2, pp. 359–469. Quantities have been adjusted here, reflecting corrections made to the database after 2005.

23. For an example of how two Otomi noblemen from the southern Mezquital Valley were chastised for practicing their ancestral religion, see González Obregón, 2002, pp. 1–16. The trial of Carlos Chichimecateuctli (Ometochtzin), a descendent of the kings of Texcoco who was burned alive after being tried for apostasy, can be consulted in González Obregón, 2009.

24. Wright-Carr, 1998, 2005b, 2017.

25. For a sixteenth-century account of a sacred cave with images of Old Mother and Old Father, near Chapa de Mota in the mountains northwest of the Valley of Mexico, see Ramos de Cárdenas, 2013, f. 10r.

26. A version in Nahuatl with Castilian translations may be consulted in the *Florentine Codex* (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 2, ff. 228v–233r). A version from Cuauhtitlan, also in Nahuatl, forms part of the manuscript called *Leyenda de los Soles* (Tena, 2002, pp. 181–185). A version from Texcoco, in sixteenth-century French, is found in the manuscript *Histoire du Mexique* (Tena, 2002, pp. 152–155). A fourth version is in Ruiz de Alarcón's *Treatise on Superstitions* (1984, pp. 70–72). For recent discussions of the story of the origin of the Fifth Sun and its relation to archaeological and ethnographic data, see Dehouve, 2018; Nielsen & Helmke, 2018.

27. Aguilera, 2000; Brundage, 1988, pp. 168–171.

28. The stylistic similarity between the *Aubin Tonalamatl* and the *Huamantla Map* was noted by Barlow (1995, p. 471); Boone (2007, pp. 212–213); Nicholson (1967, p. 82); and Quiñones Keber (2001, p. 62). When a high-resolution facsimile of the former manuscript was made available on the internet (*Calendrier religieux et divinatoire*, 2012) and when both documents were exhibited simultaneously in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City in 2014, I was able to compare analogous signs and to confirm their close stylistic similarity, considering materials, execution, form, and iconographic content. Historical evidence for a Tlaxcalan provenance of the *Aubin Tonalamatl* is found in an inventory of the manuscripts collected by Boturini in the mid-eighteenth century, drafted in 1745 (López, 1925, pp. 40–41).

29. Gruzinski (1989, pp. 89–104) describes the case of an Otomi religious leader, Juan Mixcoatl ("Cloud Serpent," *Ek'ëngüi* in Otomi), born around the first decade of the seventeenth century, a generation after the founding of the Franciscan convent at Huamantla. In 1665 he was accused of practicing his ancestral religion, integrating elements of Catholic ritual. He exhorted the natives to reject Christianity, while baptizing, confessing, and marrying people in the Huamantla region. He assigned them names according to the day of their birth, using a "calendar" in his possession, probably a manuscript like the *Aubin Tonalamatl*.

30. Bonfil Batalla, 1990.

31. This account of the map's provenance is confirmed and elaborated on by Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veytia (1848, p. 163). Boturini informed Fernández that he had removed a box containing the *Huamantla Map* from a concealed recess in the wall of a chapel in Huamantla, having heard of its existence from a descendent of the person that had hidden it years before. In 1758 Fernández was shown the site of the manuscript's discovery.

32. On antiquarian interest in native material culture, see Devecka, in this volume.

33. The *pīnāhuiztli* is discussed by Olivier, in this volume.

34. This would have been possible due to the semasiographic nature of nearly all the graphic signs painted in this manuscript. There are a few possible glottographic signs (less than 2 percent of the total), but these are all hypothetical, as mentioned above.

35. For a discussion of the role of Nahuatl as a lingua franca in early colonial New Spain, see Wright-Carr, 2007.

36. For a comparison of this painted scene with the texts in the *Florentine Codex*, see Wright-Carr, 2008a.

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7

Comparison and the Franciscan Construction of Mesoamerican Polytheism through Augustine of Hippo's De Civitate Dei

Sergio Botta

Comparison has been considered one of the most significant tools in the academic study of religion, regardless of the theoretical and methodological perspective scholars have used in relating different cultures. In one of his fundamental essays, "A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion," Jonathan Z. Smith (1996) asserts that "cultures and religions themselves continuously engage in comparison and classification as well as becoming objects of our classifications and comparisons" (p. 390). As Smith clearly noticed on a number of occasions, the birth of a comparative interest concerning the plurality of religions at the beginning of modern history is not to be intended as a prescientific curiosity about difference, but as a form of hermeneutic control that facilitates the incorporation of "other" religions into a taxonomic framework (J. Smith, 1978, 1998). Therefore, the academic usage of comparison could generate theoretical challenges and vigorous debates, as comparative patterns manufactured since the beginning of modern history have been largely based on the reproduction of generalized Christian concepts. In the historical and cultural process of selection of those elements or units that ought to be compared, there is usually a third term—a *tertium comparationis*—which could have been implicit, or even hidden, in the confrontation between different worlds (J. Smith, 1990, p. 51). However, this third term must be considered not as a given fact but as the result of culturally oriented operations. Indeed, it is produced

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c007

by social actors that have the power to establish the conditions of possibility for comparison and to organize the common space where the differences are conceptually located.

In order to analyze an example of this historical process, this chapter aims to observe the Franciscan construction of a comparative pattern in New Spain as a way to incorporate Mesoamerican gods into a Christian worldview. The main target of the comparative methodology promoted by the Franciscans in New Spain was an indigenous perception of the concept of deity that challenged the alleged universal idea of a unique God. To defend their conceptions—threatened by all the idolaters that were "reappearing" because of European expansion during modern history[1]—the Franciscans tried to establish the conditions of comparability between religious data that actually did not share any common historical connections: Greco-Roman and Mesoamerican gods.[2] Undeniably, this comparative enterprise consisted of a collective process of selecting the *comparanda*—that is, the units that should be compared. Recovering a Christian apologetic literature against paganism—for instance, Augustine of Hippo's *De Civitate Dei* [The City of God][3]—the Franciscans in New Spain shaped a discourse that, by means of the promotion of the classical idea of polytheistic God as a "prototype" in the process of confrontation between Mesoamerican and classical data, managed to hide the actual *tertium comparationis*: a third term that was actually represented by the uniqueness (and therefore the supposed incomparability) of the Christian God.

A secondary effect of this historical process (at least from the perspective of the academic study of religion) is represented by the emergence of a sort of prototheory of polytheism, essentially grounded on Christian theological biases.[4] As will be evident, this hermeneutic effort was the outcome of the reproduction of the dramatic encounter between classical religions and Christianity that had taken place during the early centuries of our era. As Lupher (2003) brilliantly noticed, while the Greek and Roman authors were on hand for the conquest of Mexico, they "were not in Mexico to conquer, but to be conquered" (p. 1). Thus the use of a comparative "classical model," although it was applied differently by distinct social actors, served the Franciscans, not to acclaim Mexican grandeur but to reveal that indigenous religion was grounded on a sort of universal error.

Consequently, any contemporary attempt to use the classical notion of "polytheism" to redescribe pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican religions should come to terms with this controversial history.[5] As an effective analytical category, it can be used only if we carefully observe its discursive genealogy and face

the risks generated by its uncritical application. To avoid the semantic traps that would be caused by a naive comparison, it is crucial to pave the way for academic research on a hypothetical Mesoamerican polytheism with an exercise in Foucauldian archaeology, which would explore the very nature of the discourses about indigenous "gods" in New Spain.

In 1523, a first group of three Flemish friars reached Mexico Tenochtitlan—the ancient capital of the indigenous reign of the Mexica, defeated by Hernán Cortés in 1521—after Pope Leo X had authorized them to reach the New World with the bull *Alias Felicis*.[6] However, in 1524 a second group of friars known as *Los Doce* [The Twelve] arrived in New Spain. In 1522, Pope Adrian VI with the bull *Exponi Nobis Fecisti* had delegated the Franciscan order to administer the evangelization of the Indians. Therefore, *Los Doce* were chosen from the reformed province of San Gabriel de Extremadura by the minister general of the order, Francisco de Quiñones, and guided to the New World by Friar Martín de Valencia. During the first decades of their presence in New Spain, the friars enjoyed the full support of Emperor Charles V and a fruitful relationship with most of the institutions of New Spain. For instance, under the patronage of Friar Juan de Zumárraga, the first Franciscan bishop of New Spain, a vast ethnographic operation, conducted by friars such as Andrés de Olmos and Toribio de Benavente (Motolinía), was promoted to obtain a better comprehension of indigenous culture and religion. Then, in 1536, the Colegio Imperial de la Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco was founded; under this important pedagogical institution, the Franciscans would eventually educate the descendants of indigenous nobles.

These first years of the Franciscan labor could be seen as an optimistic stage for the confrontation with indigenous people.[7] On the one hand, Franciscan discourses on pre-Hispanic religion were inspired by a fervent confidence in a prompt conversion of the Indians, producing a heroic self-representation of their missionary work. On the other hand, however, their interpretations of indigenous religion were infused with an exclusivist rhetoric: indigenous beliefs and practices were considered merely as *fábulas* [fictions] and *ficciones* [falsehoods], and friars generally promoted and supported an artificial representation of a completely defeated idolatry.[8] However, during the following phases of their missionary work, Franciscans became gradually aware of the unfinished nature of evangelization. As an example of this pessimistic turn, I will focus on the encyclopedic work of Friar Bernardino de Sahagún (1979), written during the second half of the sixteenth century, while I will examine a recapitulative phase of Franciscan labor focusing on the *Monarquía Indiana* [Indian Monarchy], published by Friar Juan de Torquemada in 1615. Since

Augustine of Hippo's *De Civitate Dei* (1878, 1928) was one of the most influential examples within antipagan literature, both Sahagún and Torquemada used it for their missionary purposes, in order to offer a renewed representation of indigenous religion by way of comparison between Mesoamerican and classical gods (Laird, 2016; MacCormack, 1995; Olivier, 2002).

Comparison between ancient and Mesoamerican gods had been employed earlier in New Spain, though with different purposes, at least by the chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés and by the Dominican Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas. Many contemporary scholars in Mesoamerican studies supported the hypothesis of the Catalan historian Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer (1952, pp. 140–141), according to which Franciscans' efforts in comparing different gods were the result of simple formulas, inspired by modest literary reminiscences and insignificant similarities. On the contrary, I suggest that it is not merely crucial to detect classical models used by friars to evaluate their different "comparative strategies," as proposed by Guilhem Olivier (2010, 2016) on several occasions, but it also would be convenient to examine how Franciscan discourses—for instance, by means of a reassessment of the Augustinian interpretation of paganism—managed to incorporate indigenous beliefs and practices, contributing to the construction of an *ante litteram* comparative theory of polytheism (Botta, 2017).

The work of Bernardino de Sahagún embodied a turn toward a pessimistic self-awareness.[9] Sahagún was openly critical of the optimistic understanding of many of his previous confreres and, simultaneously, disapproved of those political institutions that did not recognize the fundamental role played by the Franciscans in maintaining social and political harmony in New Spain. To confront the failure of this missionary phase, Sahagún proposed a counterimage of indigenous religion as a still dangerous and treacherous reality, not yet defeated or eradicated by the previous Franciscan labor. It is precisely in Sahagún's work that Augustinian arguments appeared in the corpus of Franciscan historical sources, meaning after the failure of the prophetic and eschatological perspective of the first friars (Cipolloni, 1994, pp. 172–173). Sahagún's pessimism is clearly noticeable in his impressive encyclopedic work, the *Florentine Codex* (1950–1982, 1979, 1989). The image of indigenous gods contained in its twelve books represented the outcome of a protracted epistemological confrontation—a tormented negotiation that started with the first ethnographic collection of data that Sahagún (1993, 1997) organized in the so-called *Primeros Memoriales* [First Memorials]; this had been collected thanks to a group of indigenous informants in Tepeapulco around 1558. Later, the hermeneutic confrontation with indigenous religion and culture

continued with additional ethnographic research projects conducted in the bigger indigenous town of Tlatelolco and collected in the *Códices Matritenses* [Codices of Madrid]. Finally, the writing process ended in the late 1560s with the composition of the twelve books in Nahuatl of the *Florentine Codex*, and lastly with the Castilian translation, known as *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España* [General History of the Things of New Spain], concluded by 1577 (Sahagún, 1989).

As regards the anti-idolatrous tools used by Sahagún, it is worth noting a partial continuity with the so-called ethnographic methodology developed by previous Franciscans such as Olmos and Motolinía.[10] The failure of those efforts in extirpating idolatry generated in Sahagún the need for a closer look at indigenous gods, as well as a diminished confidence in the success of the missionary labor. However, a deeper analytical capacity did not produce a better understanding of indigenous religion, only its more careful deconstruction.

Concerning Sahagún's usage of an Augustinian theological framework, it is worth noting that the friar explicitly quoted *De Civitate Dei* in the prologue to book 3 of his *Florentine Codex*, which was dedicated to the "origin of the gods" (Sahagún, 1989, Vol. 1, pp. 201–202). As noted by Walden Browne (2000, p. 195), this brief text on Nahua myths "is virtually the only place where Sahagún makes an explicit reference to an author and used a model for his own work." In this section, the Franciscan devoted himself to a brief account of a few pre-Hispanic myths related to indigenous gods (López Austin, 2000) and, of course, to the deconstruction of a "mythical" or "fabulous" sort of Augustinian theology, founded on the cult of those *dioses fingidos* [false gods]. The fables and the fictions that the gentiles told about their false gods—as had already happened in the time of classical paganism—revealed that the Indians still believed in *diablos mentirosos* [lying devils] and *engañadores* [deceivers]:

> *No tuvo por cosa superflua ni vana el divino Augustino tratar de la teología fabulosa de los gentiles en el sexto libro de* La ciudad de Dios*, porque, como él dice, conocidas las fábulas y ficciones vanas que los gentiles tenían cerca de sus dioses fingidos, [los creyentes fieles] pudiesen fácilmente darles a entender que aquéllos no eran dioses ni podían dar cosa ninguna que fuese provechosa a la criatura racional. A este propósito en este Tercer Libro se ponen las fábulas y ficciones que estos naturales tenían cerca de sus dioses, porque entendidas las vanidades que ellos tenían por fe cerca de sus mentirosos dioses, vengan más fácilmente por la doctrina evangélica a conocer al verdadero Dios, y que aquellos que ello tenían por dioses no eran dioses, sino diablos mentirosos y engañadores*
>
> [The divine Augustine did not consider it superfluous or vain to deal with the fictitious theology of the gentiles in the sixth book of *The City of God*, because,

> as he says, the empty fictions and falsehoods which the gentiles held regarding their false gods being known, (true believers) could easily make them understand that those were not gods, nor could they provide anything that would be beneficial to a rational being. For this reason, the fictions and falsehoods these natives held regarding their gods are placed in this third book, because the vanities they believed regarding their lying gods being understood, they may come more easily, through Gospel doctrine, to know the true God and to know that those they held as gods were not gods but lying devils and deceivers]. (Sahagún, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 201)

By means of Augustinian arguments, Sahagún was able to mobilize an artificial construction of Mesoamerican polytheism. He indicates a sort of fictional translation, a first attempt to promote an adaptation between divine names, founded on alleged cultural proximity between these two worlds. As a result, it would be worth noticing how the transfer of images from one system to another actually gave rise to creative misunderstandings (see Wright-Carr and Marco Simón, in this volume).

In the third chapter of book 6 of *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine had represented Roman polytheism in accordance with the model that Varro presented in his 41 books, which were divided into divine and human subjects. The 16 books dedicated to the divine described priests, places of worship, times of the rites, and the gods; these were divided into three types: the certain, the uncertain, and the chief and select gods. Undeniably, Augustinian deconstruction of Varronian tripartite theology was one of the most successful polemical devices in Christian anti-pagan literature. Consequently, its authority reinforced the rhetorical strategies used by Sahagún to reveal the falsity of indigenous beliefs and practices, and to facilitate the cultural translation and incorporation of religious diversity, by means of reproducing an ideological representation of Roman religion. However, it is still questionable to what extent this kind of discourse could be effective in producing positive knowledge about indigenous religion. As recently noted by Laird (2016), "the need to convert the Indians was far more pressing than the pursuit of comparative anthropology" (p. 182). He also noticed that in Sahagún's work, comparison between classical and Mesoamerican gods was never systematic or developed, serving mainly to illustrate the fictitious nature of Mesoamerican deities to a European audience.

This colonial procedure is clearly visible in the practice of a sort of anecdotal comparison between classical and Mesoamerican gods. During his ethnographic work, Sahagún offered only a few examples of comparison in some brief notations in the *Códice Matritense del Real Palacio* [Codex of the

Royal Palace of Madrid] and, finally, he fashioned a more systematic effort in his later Castilian translation of the *General History* (Olivier, 2002, 2010).[11] However, the greater part of his labor revealed an Augustinian inspiration: almost every attempt to compare indigenous and Roman gods was based on the epistemological possibility given by the list of twenty select gods in book 7, chapter 2 of *De Civitate Dei*.[12] At the same time, the classification contained in book 1 of the *Florentine Codex*, devoted to the description of Mesoamerican gods, reveals the presence of an Augustinian framework, which classified three groups of indigenous gods, goddesses, and minor gods (Olivier, 2010, pp. 402–403). Therefore, the usage of *De Civitate Dei* served not to establish a device for analyzing and understanding the ethnographic data but to authorize his whole project by presenting a systematic plan of attack against idolatry (Solodkow, 2014, p. 350). Concerning book 3 of the *Florentine Codex*, it is important to consider that Augustinian arguments were not only directed against myths themselves, but also served to expose a more complex project of deconstruction of the entire indigenous religion. Sahagún's interpretation permitted the incorporation of indigenous mythology in a broader framework, and the construction of a Mesoamerican tripartite theology: an artificial *cultus deorum* [cult of the gods], directed toward idolatrous deities, which was capable—as in the case of Roman polytheism—of politically organizing the whole of reality.[13] To reveal this wider plan, it is necessary to look at the Augustinian organization of the first five of Sahagún's books, to reveal the presence of a precise operational device (Browne, 2000, pp. 205–206). As noted by Ríos Castaño (2014) and recently by Bustamante García (2018), while book 3 of the *Florentine Codex* is devoted to an analysis of the myths that concern the actions of the main gods, books 1 and 2 also seem to fulfil an Augustinian function. For instance, it should also be noted that Sahagún's arguments in the appendix to book 1 recovered the theological framework used by Augustine to dismantle the Varronian physical or natural theology and to provide a rationalization of the images of pagan gods (Browne, 2000, p. 199), for example, the well-known formula of Psalm 95, "*omnes dii gentium demonia*" [all the gods of the heathen are devils].[14] As Ríos Castaño noted (2014, pp. 132–136), the distribution of the divine subject matter follows, in reverse order, a sort of Varronian framework. If we look in detail at the structure of Sahagún's work, it should be clear that book 1 (dedicated to the description of the gods) would correspond to books 14–16 of the Varronian *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* [Antiquities of Human and Divine Things]. As explained by the friar, all the books dedicated to indigenous religion, from books 1 to 5, were clearly inspired by an Augustinian model. Book 2, dedicated to the religious

rites of the twenty-day cycles, establishes a sort of political or civic theology (Botta, 2021) that has its parallel in the books that Varro dedicated to the divine cult (8, 11, 12, and 13). The appendix to book 2, dedicated to the priests and to the sacred buildings of Mexico Tenochtitlan, would correspond to books 2 to 7 of the *Antiquitates*. Finally, Sahagún's books 4 and 5, dedicated to omens and divination, would correspond to the fourth and third by Varro.

Thus, the Augustinian model served Sahagún to construct—or we should rather say invent—a Mesoamerican pantheon formed by twelve major deities, according to the Varronian model, and similar to those of the Romans that were meticulously dismantled in *De Civitate Dei*. What really mattered in Sahagún's project is the reproduction of the structure of a generic paganism and not the specific content of different gods. The identities and characters of all Mesoamerican deities were almost irrelevant. On the contrary, it was crucial to offer to his confreres involved in the evangelization of the Indians a way to recognize the survival of an idolatry that was still hidden behind an imperfect Christianity. For this reason, Sahagún's comparative experiments only appeared in the Castilian translation of his encyclopedic work, the *General History*; this actually represented the final phase of a project destined to defend the Franciscan work against the attacks of the Spanish Crown, which, especially under Philip II, was openly hostile to all these experiments conducted with and in favor of indigenous people. Here, occasional comparisons between classical and Mesoamerican gods appeared as anecdotal attempts to translate those exotic realities for European readers. Consequently, the efficacy of the Augustinian model was based mainly on its capacity to mobilize a coherent Christian interpretation of the indigenous divine subject matter: on the one hand, it could be organized according to the Varronian model, while on the other, it could be dismantled through the meticulous usage of Augustinian arguments against tripartite theology.

Later, in the midst of the definitive crisis of their pedagogical projects, Franciscan discourses on indigenous religion reached a pessimistic political climax in the work of Gerónimo de Mendieta, represented by his controversial *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana* [Ecclesiastic History of the Indies], written during the last decades of the sixteenth century. Eventually, a sort of conciliation and recapitulation appeared in Juan de Torquemada's *Los Veintiún Libros Rituales y Monarquía Indiana* [The Twenty-One Ritual Books and Indian Monarchy] (1975–1983).[15] Concerning the description of indigenous beliefs and practices and despite a systematic use of the "Lascasian net" (Bernand & Gruzinski, 1988; Brading, 1988, pp. 304–322)—as the Dominican had extensively used *De Civitate Dei* in his *Apologética Historia Sumaria* [Apologetic

Summary History]—Torquemada distanced himself from many of the proposals of his predecessors with his *Monarquía Indiana*. The friar considered all forms of worship as products of a natural disposition. Under every historical and cultural circumstance, humans would not be able to live without a proper knowledge of God. This statement reinforced a general representation of the religious history of humanity, within which idolatry represented the natural condition of every people in the absence of God's grace (García Quintana, 1983, pp. 396–400). Starting from this alleged analogy between every kind of religion, in book 6 of the *Monarquía Indiana*, through a systematic usage of Augustinian arguments, Torquemada developed a careful methodology, rethinking the antipagan tools contained in *De Civitate Dei*, which enabled an incorporation of indigenous religion into a universal framework. Not only the gentiles but also these Indians fell into a sort of general error, as they worshipped the Sun and Moon and built sumptuous temples, as also did the people of Egypt. So indigenous misrepresentation of the divine was the same as in all "ancient nations of the gentiles" (1975–1983, Vol. 3, p. 52 [6.12]). Nevertheless, familiarity among different forms of idolatry was to be found not just in anecdotal similarities (as happened in Sahagún's work) but in recognizing alleged regularity between different but uniform pagan gods. Torquemada employed Augustinian arguments and even his lists of classical gods, as devices to create an interpenetration between diverse "paganisms." This was done because the gods venerated by the indigenous people and by the ancients not only resembled each other, as we previously noted, but were considered as the expression of a unique historical process (Vol. 3, p. 136 [7: prologue]). In fact, every historical and different expression of idolatry should be considered a result of the linguistic differentiation produced after the fall of the Tower of Babel and of the ethnic differentiation following the Deluge.

This change toward a genealogical interpretation of Mesoamerican idolatry originated in and was influenced by a deeply transformed historical context. During the expansion of the Catholic Monarchy, from 1580 to 1640, the connection between civilizations multiplied and produced a globalization of space and time. Therefore, the work of missionary orders represents a perfect "theater of observation" (Gruzinski, 2004, pp. 30–31) to understand the new conditions of possibility for a global discourse on religion. It means that missionary work was no longer just local or ethnographic, but global and anthropological. Consequently, in the *Monarquía Indiana*, idolatry was no longer an instrument to exclude indigenous religiosity; instead, it represents a sort of universal language, used to favor the incorporation of indigenous beliefs and practices in a comprehensive, but still hierarchical, Christian framework.

Torquemada widely used the Augustinian model to organize indigenous religious matter in his *Monarquía Indiana*: book 6 is dedicated to idolatry and the gods, book 7 to sacrifice, book 8 to the temples, book 9 to the priests, and book 10 to religious festivals (Frost, 1983, pp. 69–85). As for the description of Mesoamerican gods, Torquemada took the Augustinian framework to its transcendent conclusion, for example when, in comparing indigenous and classical gods, he claimed that in the West Indies the gods were divided into "three parts or classes," as was done also by the "ancient nations of the gentiles."[16] In this section of his work, Torquemada reconsidered the list and description of Roman gods—provided by Varro, criticized by Augustine, and reproduced by Sahagún—with the aim of assimilating any indigenous gods, as he presumed a complete interpenetration of these two worlds. Concerning the problem of the "select gods," for example, it should be noted that Torquemada—once again quoting Las Casas—proposed a sort of dialogue with the list in Sahagún's first book and the one contained in *De Civitate Dei*. As an example of the recognized importance of Sahagún's work in New Spain, Torquemada replicated—despite a reversed order—Sahagún's group of the first five "major" gods: Huitzilopochtli, Painal, Tezcatlipoca, Tlaloc Tlamacazqui, and Quetzalcoatl. Regarding comparative efforts in the *Monarquía Indiana*, it is worth noting that Torquemada duplicated Sahagún's analogies in many cases. Among others, Tlazolteotl was compared with Venus (pp. 100–101 [6.32]) and Xiuhteuctli with Vulcan (pp. 93–94 [6.28]). Moreover, Torquemada also showed an interpretative independence. Actually, he changed the meaning of several of Sahagún's comparative choices: for example, Ceres was identified with Centeotl and no longer with Chicomecoatl (pp. 87–88 [6.25]). Finally, Torquemada looked frequently for original identifications within the list of the selected Augustinian gods that had not been compared by Sahagún: Tezcatzoncatl was Bacchus and Iyacateuctli was Mercury (pp. 93–96 [6.28–29]). However, that independence in comparing was not just the product of a refined rhetorical strategy, capable of better describing a diverse religion for a Western audience. On the contrary, Torquemada used Augustinian arguments as an epistemological tool to interpenetrate Mesoamerican and classical gods (Bernand & Gruzinski, 1988). To observe the consequences of this interpretative model, it could be useful to note that Sahagún's descriptions and interpretations were in some cases "corrected" by Torquemada through arguments contained in *De Civitate Dei*. As an example of this dialogue between the different sources, it is worth mentioning the peculiar analysis that Torquemada produced about the nature of the Mexican god Huitzilopochtli.[17] In this case, Torquemada reproduced the main elements of Sahagún's description, but his final interpretation was profoundly

divergent. In the first place, Torquemada rejected Sahagún's identification of Huitzilopochtli with Hercules,[18] proposing an alternative analogy with the Roman god of war, Mars (pp. 72–75 [6.21]). On the one hand, Sahagún's identification of Huitzilopochtli with Hercules served to promote a euhemeristic interpretation that could have exposed the human nature of Huitzilopochtli and revealed his alleged divinity to the idolaters.[19] On the other hand, Torquemada's identification of Huitzilopochtli with Mars seems to proceed coherently with his overall project. Torquemada's purpose was—as a sort of anticipation of the criollo agenda—to show the positive contribution that an "Indian monarchy" (but definitively Christianized) could have provided to the political and religious project of a universal "Catholic monarchy." It was in fact crucial to dismantling the very foundation of a dangerous pre-Hispanic political theology, that is, Huitzilopochtli as the patron of the Mexica. To achieve that goal, Torquemada proposed an extraordinary and creative cultural translation: the very nature of Huitzilopochtli was explained, not only by reproducing Augustinian arguments against war among the pagans but also through an intercultural reflection concerning the etymology of the name of Mars (August. *De civ. D.* 18.10). Torquemada proposed—or we should say that he created this pattern through the usage of comparison—a hypothesis about the existence of transcultural worship of a general god of war, a great intercultural god of battles (p. 74 [6.21]). Therefore, the cult dedicated to these two gods—the Indian Mars and the ancient Mars—would have produced identical features. For example, the name of the Areopagus of Athens, a building related to Ares-Mars, could reveal the symmetrical existence in Mesoamerica of an indigenous Areopagus, that is to say the Templo Mayor, the Great Temple of Mexico Tenochtitlan, on which Huitzilopochtli was actually worshipped (p. 75 [6.21]).

Finally, we can briefly observe another example of this comparative strategy in Torquemada's discourse about the god Tlaloc, a Mesoamerican deity of water and earth. In the Augustinian interpretation of Torquemada, Tlaloc was part of the group of natural gods, that is, the third lineage of the gods of the gentiles in *De Civitate Dei*, as they attributed to every natural thing a god, giving them different offices, and so there were as many gods as there were human things (p. 59 [6.16]). The similarities that emerged from the comparison between Tlaloc and Neptune must necessarily be the product of the action of the Devil,[20] who must have been the inventor of both (p. 76 [6.23]). However, it is worth noting how the forced comparison with Neptune led Torquemada to think of a marine aspect of the cult of Tlaloc that had not appeared in any work by previous chroniclers. It is evident, then, that this unusual interpretation of the god was not the result of new ethnographic data but was once again

the consequence of the theological usage of Augustinian arguments. Again, the analogy with Roman gods does not provide useful elements for a better understanding of indigenous religion. Torquemada's description is not the outcome of ethnographic research, nor does it represent the fruit of a renewed epistemological strategy to promote a better understanding of pre-Hispanic religion. On the contrary, Torquemada constructed a definitive interpenetration of two worlds, that is to say, that indigenous and classical gods were to be considered as identical. Therefore, after recapitulating Augustinian arguments against the cult dedicated to Neptune, Torquemada affirmed that it was sufficiently proved that these two "demons" were the same: Neptune was Tlaloc and Tlaloc was Neptune (p. 81 [6.23]).

In conclusion, Sahagún showed a sort of balance and symmetry between a rhetorical and a structural function in the use of Augustinian arguments. He carefully used the authority of the Father of the Church to empower his missionary project and, at the same time, to explain to a Western audience the errors of indigenous people in familiar terms. From the point of view of a research project devoted to the reconstruction of Mesoamerican religion, Sahagún's data offered a useful representation, at least partially. Despite the fact that his comparative enterprise proceeds through metaphors and anecdotes to dismantle the pre-Hispanic religion, it continues to deal with ethnographic data. In contrast, in Torquemada's work a rhetorical function seems less relevant than a structural one. This happened because the *Monarquía Indiana* responded to new historical concerns that emerged at the beginning of the seventeenth century. During this missionary stage, by means of comparison Torquemada placed Mesoamerican polytheism at a precise stage of the universal development of human religiosity, in that global and conceptual pattern that Christianity built to authorize control over religious otherness. In this perspective, the prolonged proximity to pre-Hispanic idolatries must have convinced Torquemada that it was possible to recognize traces of a universal history. Actually, the structural use of comparison was legitimized not only by formal analogies between Mesoamerican and classical gods, but also by the construction of a common genealogy, as manifested within the Christian history of salvation. Consequently, in the historical course of the Franciscan labor in New Spain, the third term on which the comparison was grounded—the alleged universality of the Christian notion of God—became increasingly stronger. Instead of opening an epistemological confrontation with religious otherness, Torquemada's comparison with Mesoamerican ethnographic data consolidated the Christian interpretative paradigm to the point that this comparative process of classification became an effective tool to think about all

the different religions of the countless pagan peoples recently discovered. It was the theological result of an extraordinary global endeavor, which would have offered an essential contribution to the transformation of the concept of religion during early modern history.

NOTES

1. On idolatry in modern history, see Barbu, 2014; Sheehan, 2006.

2. For a reflection on how comparison in a "middle ground" could give rise to some strange and creative misunderstandings, see Woolf, in this volume.

3. For a general introduction to Augustine of Hippo's work, see Brown, 1967/2000; Marrou, 1956.

4. On the construction of a general theory of religion in modern history, see Preus, 1987; Strenski, 2015; Stroumsa, 2010.

5. Concerning academic usage of polytheism as a general category in the classical world and in a comparative perspective, see Assmann, 2004; Gladigow, 2002; Greer, 2005; Paper, 2005; Patton, 2009; Schmidt, 1987; M. Smith, 2010. About the application of the concept of polytheism in Mesoamerican studies, see, among others, Florescano, 1997; López Austin, 1983; Nicholson, 1971.

6. On Franciscan labor in New Spain, see, among many others, Baudot, 1976 and 1990; Cipolloni, 1994; Díaz Balsera, 2005; Don, 2010; Frost, 2002; Kobayashi, 1974; Maravall, 1949; McClure, 2017; Morales, 1983; Phelan, 1956/1970; Ricard, 1933; Weckmann, 1982.

7. As suggested by John Schwaller (2009, p. 261), it is possible to define three phases of the Franciscan labor in New Spain: "the first began with the arrival of the first 12 Franciscans and lasted until the erection of the diocese of Mexico in 1536. The second phase continued from that time until the pestilence of 1576, while the third phase ran from the last quarter of the 16th century onwards."

8. See also the recent proposal by Carlos Daniel Altbach Pérez (2020) that suggests reading the adjustment of the political-religious structures of European intellectual history in the process of comparison with "Mesoamerican polytheism" through the use of the literary trope of the cannibal.

9. On Sahagún's work, see Browne, 2000; Bustamante García, 1989, 1990; Edmonson, 1974; Klor de Alva, Nicholson, & Quiñones Keber, 1988; León-Portilla, 1999, 2002; Mignolo, 1995; Ríos Castaño, 2014; Romero Galván & Máynez, 2007, 2011.

10. On Sahagún's ethnographic methodology, see Bustamante García, 2003; López Austin, 1974.

11. On the one hand, it is worth noting that indigenous informants did not provide comparative suggestions in the Nahuatl texts of the *Primeros Memoriales* and the

Florentine Codex, with the sole exception of the identification of the goddess Chicomecoatl with the Roman Ceres, as noted by Olivier (2010, p. 391, note 10).

12. "The following gods, certainly, Varro signalizes as select, devoting one book to this subject: Janus, Jupiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, Sol, Orcus, father Liber, Tellus, Ceres, Juno, Luna, Diana, Minerva, Venus, Vesta; of which twenty gods, twelve are males, and eight females" (August. *De civ. D.* 7.2 [ed. 1928]).

13. For a recent comprehensive interpretation of Roman polytheism, see Rüpke, 2018.

14. On this subject, Nicolau d'Olwer (1952, p. 67) noted that Sahagún's "Exclamationes del Autor" [Author's Exclamations], which closes the appendix to book 1 (1989, Vol. 1, p. 75), giving a general sense of the struggle against the indigenous gods, exposed a "heartfelt prayer of Augustinian flavor."

15. On Torquemada's work, see Alcina Franch, 1969, 1973; Ibarra Herrerías, 2012; Léon-Portilla, 1983.

16. "De los antiguos sabemos (según San Agustín, en los libros de la *Ciudad de Dios*), cómo dividieron sus dioses en tres partes o géneros, el primero de los cuales nombraron selectos, que quiere decir apartados o escogidos; el segundo género era de los medio dioses, y el tercero, de los dioses rústicos o agrestes" [Of the ancient ones we know (according to Saint Augustine, in the books of *The City of God*) how they divided their gods in three parts or classes, the first of which they called select, which means set aside or chosen; the second class was that of the demigods, and the third, that of the rustic or wild gods] (Torquemada 1975–1983, Vol. 3, p. 58 [6.15]).

17. On the transformation of the pre-Hispanic Huitzilopochtli in colonial times, see Boone, 1989.

18. Even though, in a first and eventually discarded comparative attempt in his *Códice Matritense del Real Palacio*, Sahagún had tried to identify Huitzilopochtli as "*otro Marte*" [another Mars] (Olivier, 2010, p. 393).

19. This is demonstrated by the fact that Sahagún had tried to compare Huitzilopochtli with Mars in the first place, but he rather preferred to propose a euhemerist interpretation of the patron god of the Mexica and then established the well-known comparison with Hercules.

20. On the Devil in the New World, see Cervantes, 2005.

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8

Bernardino de Sahagún on Nahua Astrology and Divination

Greco-Roman Traditions, Christian Disapproval and Ambiguity, and Mesoamerican Practices

Guilhem Olivier

translated by layla wright-contreras

> He abandoned the spirit that inspired Apollo to answer, and this cave and place [Delphi] where he answered, and his path took him to remote unknown regions. And so we can think that in fleeing from all areas where the Gospel is preached, he came to these Indies, and until preaching reached these lands, he had the same oracles and deceived wretched people with his answers.
>
> —Las Casas, *Apologética Historia Sumaria* [Apologetic Summary History][1]

Expelled from the Old World as the spreading of the Gospel progressed, pagan gods and the Devil himself found refuge in the Indies, where they could continue to deceive their inhabitants. Mesoamerican thought had numerous divination practices at its core, similar in many respects to the ancient Greek and Roman practices that Bartolomé de Las Casas described and condemned. Hence the Dominican friar's suspicion that Apollo, a deity closely linked to divination, "had come to these Indies" (Las Casas, 1967, Vol. 2, p. 429). Now, unlike Islam, which considered divination techniques as part of the profane sciences and therefore detached from religion (Fahd, 1966), Christianism generally condemned these "pagan" practices. The Christian position, however, evolved throughout the centuries and occasionally became ambiguous in terms of certain divinatory practices such as "natural astrology" (Boudet, 2006; Díaz 2020, pp. 232–237; Fox, 1986, pp. 631–632; Ryan, 2011).

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c008

The attitude of the Catholic Church toward the use of holy books for prophesy also fluctuated: the Greeks resorted to Homer and the Romans to Virgil, opening their books at random to make predictions based on the paragraphs found (Bouché-Leclercq, 1879, pp. 195–196; Meerson, 2019). Similarly, Christians would use the "lucky Bible" and or "consult the Gospel" and would attach prophetic value to the passages arbitrarily chosen (Boglioni, 2000; Boudet, 2006, pp. 95–96; Van der Horst, 2019; Wilkinson, 2019).[2] Even Saint Augustine and Saint Francis made this type of consultation to confirm their vocations, though some versions on the life of the founder of the Franciscan order minimize this action, claiming that it was God who had asked Saint Francis to carry out the consultation (Boglioni, 2000, pp. 52–54).[3]

As for other ancient divination techniques, they were mostly categorically condemned by the Bible (Leviticus 20, 6, 27; Deuteronomy 18, 9–14) and then by Church Fathers, starting with Saint Augustine in his *De Doctrina Christiana* (6.21) and subsequently by others such as Saint Isidore of Seville (2004, pp. 700–707). The latter equaled divination to magic, condemning sorcerers and soothsayers for usurping God's powers and for their associations with demons. Astrologers, who Isidore of Seville classified as *astrologi*, *genethliaci*, *mathematici*, or *horoscopi*, were also censured in his writings. Astronomy, however, was accepted inasmuch as it constituted the "natural" part of astrology. The concept of "natural astrology," of Greco-Arab origin, is essential to understand the reactions of the Spanish chroniclers toward Mesoamerican astrology and divination. Indeed, the arrival in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Spain of Arabic science and Greek and Hebrew texts on astrology, divination, and magic involved profound changes in the perception of these disciplines in the Occident (Ryan, 2011, pp. 66–70, 83–91). As Jean-Patrice Boudet (2006, p. 19) explains, "the translations [of these texts] in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries contributed to promoting amongst the clergy and some royal courts a sophisticated knowledge of astrology, considered one of the essential motivations for astronomical studies and a useful aid in medical and political praxis."

Around 1460, a chair for the teaching of astrology was endowed at the University of Salamanca, were Bernardino de Sahagún was studying (Boudet, 2006, p. 286; León-Portilla, 1999, p. 33; Mendieta, 1997, Vol. 2, p. 380 [5.41]). The University's interest in this science is illustrated in the superb mural painted by Fernando Gallego on the vault of its library between 1483 and 1486. In the Flemish style, inspired by ancient classical models and Islamic astrology, the painter depicted the planetary gods (the Sun and Mercury), the signs of the zodiac, the northern and southern constellations, the winds, and the stars (Martínez Frías, 2006).

It is therefore not surprising that in the Castilian text of book 7 of the *Florentine Codex*, where Sahagún more or less accurately translates Nahuatl texts obtained from his collaborators, he matches certain indigenous beliefs to European astrology:

> *Hacía esta gente particular reverencia y particulares sacrificios a los Mastelejos del cielo que andan cerca de las Cabrillas, que es el signo del Toro . . . A aquellas estrellas que en algunas partes se llaman El Carro, esta gente las llama Escurpión, porque tienen figura de escurpión o alacrán. Y así se llaman en muchas partes del mundo*
>
> [These people particularly revered and offered special sacrifices to the Mastelejos of the sky which are near the Cabrillas, which is the sign of the Bull. . . . The stars known in some places as The Chariot are called by these people Scorpion, because they resemble a scorpion. And that is what they are called in many parts of the world]. (Sahagún, 2000, Vol. 2, pp. 699–700 [7.3–4])

He felt, however, greatly disappointed when he learned about the Nahua knowledge of the stars, also described in book 7:

> *Razón tendrá el lector de desgustarse en la lectión deste Séptimo Libro, y mucho mayor la tendrá si entiende la lengua indiana. . . . Esto es porque los mismos naturales dieron la relación de las cosas que en este libro se tratan muy baxamante, según que ellos las entienden, y en baxo lenguaje. Y así se traduxo en la lengua española, en baxo estilo y en baxo quilate de entendimiento, pretendiendo solamente saber y escrebir lo que ellos entendían en esta materia de astrología y filosofía natural, que es muy poco y muy baxo*
>
> [The reader will have reason for displeasure in the reading of this seventh Book, and will have even more if he deals with the Indian language. . . . This is because the natives themselves gave the account of the things treated in this Book very crudely, according as they understood them, and in crude style. And so it was translated into the Spanish language in crude style, with little excellence of understanding, with the sole object of knowing and recording what they understood of this subject of astrology and natural philosophy, which is very little and very crude]. (Sahagún, 1950–1982, Pt. 1, pp. 67–68; 2000, Vol. 2, pp. 478–479 [7: prologue])

Rather than displeased—the seventh book contains one of the most beautiful versions of the myth of the origin of the Sun and the Moon and a superb description of the New Fire ceremony—modern readers might feel surprised by Sahagún's opinion and, certainly, by the dearth of indigenous testimonies. Were ancient Mesoamericans not experts in star observation? The alignment

of their monuments, analyzed by archaeoastronomers, and their complex calendar systems, which continue to foster research and abundant debate, reveal their advanced level in astronomy. Were Sahagún's Nahua collaborators not aware of the knowledge of native astronomers?

Other hypotheses may be ventured: firstly, we must bear in mind that this knowledge was closely linked to native deities. In fact, when Sahagún asks about the Sun, his informers first describe the festival celebrated every 260 days to honor the god Tonatiuh (Sahagún, 1950–1982, Pt. 8, p. 1 [7.1]). As for the Moon, after briefly describing its phases, the Nahua naturally recount the attractive myth of the birth of the Sun and the Moon in Teotihuacan (Pt. 8, pp. 3–9 [7.2]). This was obviously not what Sahagún expected. According to him, such myths were nothing but "*ridiculosas fábulas*" [ludicrous fables] (Sahagún, 2000, Vol. 2, p. 689 [7: prologue]). Despite his disapproval, he did record them in this essential text. We could have pondered, however, on the existence of other mythical cycles linked to the stars that failed to be transmitted. I would, for instance, suggest the relevance of the planet Venus in Mesoamerica, manifest in numerous pre-Hispanic codices. Sahagún's collaborators devote only about twelve lines to it (1950–1982, Pt. 8, pp. 11–12 [7.3]). Possibly the friar's questions, biased by his Western approach, did not correspond to the indigenous collaborators' way of conveying their knowledge, who would tread cautiously when transmitting it so as not to raise suspicions of idolatry.

Sahagún's attitude toward "judicial astrology or Indian divinatory practice," dealt with in book 4 of the *Florentine Codex*, is also quite revealing. The length of the prologue and especially of the appendix to book 4 is quite striking, being an indication of the relevance Sahagún gave to those matters, as well as to the need to clarify questions regarding native calendars (1950–1982, Pt. 1, pp. 61–62; Pt. 5, pp. 137–146; 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 345–346, 421–432). Sahagún begins the prologue to book 4 describing the "astrologers called *genethliaci*" who, given the day and time of birth of a person, "*pronostican las inclinaciones naturales de los hombres*" [prognosticate the natural inclinations of men], based on the star sign and on the conjunction of the planets. It should be recalled that Isidore of Seville, following Saint Augustine's definition, used the term *genethliaci* to designate a category of astrologers who would describe the fate of newborns based on the position of the stars.[4] Sahagún remarks that this type of astrology was tolerated,[5] inasmuch as "*ningún poder tiene sobre el libre albedrío*" [it has no power over free will].[6] As for the Nahua fortune tellers, the *tōnalpōuhqueh*, after explaining their role "*adivinar las condiciones, vida y muerte de los que nacían*" [to foretell the attributes, the life and death of those who were born], Sahagún explains that this divinatory practice originated in the

Figure 8.1. *The god Quetzalcoatl was the creator of the* tōnalpōhualli, *the 260-day calendar (Sahagún 1979, Vol. 1, f. 211r [3.3]). Drawing by Rodolfo Ávila.*

god Quetzalcoatl and was based on a 260-day calendar (figure 8.1). According to Sahagún, however,

> *Esta manera de adivinanza en ninguna manera puede ser lícita, porque ni se funda en la influencia de las estrellas, ni en cosa ninguna natural, ni su círculo es conforme al círculo del año, porque no contiene más de doscientos y sesenta días, los cuales acabados tornan al principio*
>
> [This manner of soothsaying can in no way be valid, because it is based neither on the influence of the stars, nor on any natural thing. Neither is its cycle in accordance with the year cycle, as it contains only two hundred and sixty days which, when they end, begin again]. (1950–1982, Pt. 1, p. 61; 2000, Vol. 1, p. 345 [4: prologue])

The lack of a "natural" astronomical reference—for example a 365-day cycle—seems to raise his suspicions and trigger his disapproval of the Mesoamerican divinatory calendar. The shrewd effacer of idolatry concludes:

Figure 8.2. *Representation of a devil taking the place of Tlaloc to receive offerings, in a vignette of the* Florentine Codex *(Sahagún 1979, Vol. 2, f. 31r [6.8]). Drawing by Rodolfo Ávila.*

> *Este artificio de contar o es arte de nigromanticia o pacto y fábrica del Demonio, lo cual con toda diligencia se debe desarraigar*
>
> [This trick of reckoning is either a necromantic craft or a pact and invention of the Devil which should be uprooted with all diligence]. (Sahagún, 2000, Vol. 1, p. 345 [4: prologue])

In the setting of a battle to the death against the Devil ruling in the Indies, a supposed pact with the Devil establishes a key argument to condemn the use of the 260-day divinatory calendar (figure 8.2).[7] Actually, in the very title of book 4, Sahagún (2000) emphasizes the idolatrous nature of the indigenous divinatory system:

> *Libro cuarto: De la astrología judiciaria o arte de adivinar que estos mexicanos usaban para saber cuáles días eran bien afortunados y cuáles mal afortunados, y qué condiciones tendrían los que nacían en los días atribuidos a los caracteres o signos que aquí se ponen, y parece cosa de nigromancia, que no de astrología*
>
> [Book four: On judicial astrology, or the art of predicting, which these Mexicans used to know which days were lucky and which were unlucky, and

what would be the nature of those born on the days attributed to the characters or signs explained here, and this seems a matter of necromancy, rather than astrology]. (Vol. 1, p. 347)

The use of the word *nigromanticia* is quite telling. Indeed, we find in Isidore of Seville (Sevilla, 2004) that "*necromantii sunt, quorum praecantationibus videntur resuscitati mortui divinare, et ad interrogata respondere*" [The *necromantici* are those who seem to awaken the dead so as the dead foresee and reply to questions made to them] (pp. 704–705). In addition, blood is poured over the corpse in order to awaken it. In the year 1256, under King Alfonso X of Castile, an Arab treatise on astral magic, the renowned *Picatrix*, had been translated into Castilian and later into Latin (Ryan, 2011, pp. 94–101). This volume, whose original Arabic title was *Ghâyât al-Hakîm* [The Guide of the Wise], records the word *nigromantia* as "the science dealing with all things unknown to intelligence, which most men do not comprehend how they are made nor what causes them"; the term *nigromantia* is used here to translate the Arabic word *sihr*, "magic" (Boudet, 2006, p. 129). Finally, Alfonso X, in his *Siete Partidas* [Seven-Part Code], defines *nigromancia* "as a strange science intended for invoking evil spirits," linked to dangerous nocturnal practices which may unleash death or insanity (Boudet, 2006, p. 264). These various meanings might have been taken into consideration by Sahagún to stress both the esoteric use of the divinatory calendar—which he then explains—and the alleged pact with the Devil, due to the "unnatural" approach of the *tōnalpōhualli*. It should be added that in the Nahuatl text, Sahagún's collaborators also state, based on the title of book 4: "*Auh in, y, tonalamatl oc cenca ie melaoac, ic motocaiotiz, naoallotl, ca naoalti intech povia*" [And this book of days is more correctly called sorcery, for it belonged to the sorcerers] (Sahagún, 1950–1982, Pt. 5, p. 1). In this context, the *tōnalpōuhqueh* become *nāhualtin*, acquiring all the negative connotations attached to the term in the colonial period, during which it is often translated as "warlocks" or "witches" (Martínez González, 2007; Molina, 1880/1970, Pt. 1, f. 21v; Pt. 2, f. 63v).

In the long appendix to book 4, Sahagún insists on condemning the idolatrous nature of the indigenous divinatory calendar:

Esta cuenta, muy perjudicial y muy supersticiosa y muy llena de idolatría, como parece en este libro Cuarto, algunos la alaban mucho, diciendo que era muy ingeniosa y que ninguna mácula tenía. Esto dixeron por no entender a qué fin se endereza esta cuenta, el cual es muy malo, idolátrico. De poco entendieron la muchedumbre de supersticiones y fiestas y sacrificios idolátricos que en ella se contienen y llamaron a esta cuenta el calendario de los indios, no entendiendo que esta cuenta no alcanza a todo el año . . .

Y cierto fue grande inadvertencia y culpable ignorancia loar por palabra y por escrito una cosa tan mala y tan llena de idolatría

[This very pernicious count, superstitious and full of idolatry, as is seen in this fourth book, some praise highly, saying that it was very ingenious and contained no blemish. This they said because they did not understand for what purpose this count, which is very evil and idolatrous, was established. Little did they appreciate the multitude of superstitions, feasts, and idolatrous sacrifices involved in it. And they called this count the calendar of the Indians, not understanding that this count doth not extend through all of the year. . . . And surely it was great carelessness and culpable ignorance to praise by word of mouth and in writing something so evil and full of idolatry]. (1950–1982, Pt. 5, p. 139; 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 422–423)

Sahagún even quotes two fragments of a treatise written by a coreligionist who describes and expresses admiration for the native calendar, claiming that "*es de saber que en este calendario no hay cosa de idolatría*" [it should be known that in this calendar there is nothing idolatrous] (Sahagún, 1950–1982, Pt. 5, p. 140; 2000, Vol. 1, p. 423 [4: appendix]).[8] Sahagún not only refutes this opinion but also ruthlessly criticizes the flawed interpretation made by the anonymous writer who ignored the idolatrous nature of the *tōnalpōhualli*:

En lo que dice que los indios se composiero desta cuenta se mostraron filósofos naturales es falsísimo, porque esta cuenta no le llevan por ninguna orden natural, porque fue invención del Demonio y arte de adivinación

[As to what he saith, that the Indians (who) devised this count showed themselves to be natural philosophers: this is most false. For they do not carry out this count according to any natural order; for it was an invention of the Devil and an art of soothsaying]. (1950–1982, Pt. 5, p. 141; 2000, Vol. 1, p. 424)

Parenthetically speaking, this denial by Sahagún of the role of "natural philosopher" conferred on the Indians contrasts with the admiring opinion that he himself expresses in the texts of book 6 of the *Florentine Codex*, even of the prayers dedicated to the pagan gods, as he mentions in the prologue to book 9:

El Sexto Libro, que hace volumen por sí, trata de la retórica y filosofía moral que estos naturales alcanzaban, donde se pone muchas maneras de oraciones, muy elegantes y muy morales, y aun las que tocan a los dioses y a sus cerimonias, se pueden decir muy teologales

[The sixth book, which forms a volume by itself, deals with the rhetoric and moral philosophy which these natives achieved. In it are set forth many forms

of very elegant, very moral prayers. And even those that touch upon the gods and their ceremonies can be said to be very theological]. (1950–1982, Pt. 1, p. 71; 2000, Vol. 2, p. 787)

Now, this Nahuatl-language "rhetoric and moral philosophy"—which includes, among other texts, the famous *huēhuetlahtōlli*, "ancient words"—was to be used by Sahagún himself as a model for his writings intended for evangelization, such as his sermon book and the *Psalmodia Cristiana* [Christian Psalmody], the only work published by the Franciscan in his lifetime (Alcántara Rojas, 2008). As we have noted, Sahagún's attitude toward the 260-day indigenous divinatory calendar is different; although he did modify the annual 365-day calendar to adapt it to the Christian model, his implacability in regard to the idolatrous nature of the *tōnalpōhualli* leads him to forcefully refute prior writings:

de manera que ninguna verdad contiene aquel tratado arriba puesto que aquel religioso escribió, mas antes contiene falsedad y mentira muy perniciosa

[so that the treatise aforementioned, which that member of a religious order wrote, containeth no truth but rather very pernicious error and falsehood]. (1950–1982, Pt. 5, p. 141; 2000, Vol. 1, p. 425 [4: appendix])

The second quotation refers to the general knowledge of these calendar counts, to which Sahagún retorts that actually only the *tōnalpōuhqueh* (figure 8.3) were able to use the divinatory calendar "*porque contiene muchas dificultades y obscuridades*" [because it containeth many difficulties and obscurities] (1950–1982, Vol. 4, p. 142; 2000, Vol. 1, p. 426 [4: appendix]). Sahagún adds, regarding the *tōnalpōuhqueh*:

Teníanlos como profetas y sabidores de las cosas futuras. Y ansí, acudían a ellos en muchas cosas, como antiguamente los hijos de Israel acudían a los profetas

[They considered them to be prophets and knowers of future things. Hence, they depended upon them for many things, as in days of old the sons of Israel depended upon the prophets]. (1950–1982, Vol. 4, p. 142; 2000, Vol. 1, p. 426)

Some scholars, like Georges Baudot (1983, pp. 316–317, 462–466) and Jesús Bustamante García (1990, pp. 311–314), have investigated the identity of the unnamed "member of a religious order" mentioned by Friar Bernardino. The discovery in 1991 of a document from the Tribunal of the Inquisition, dating from August 14, 1572, helps solve the mystery surrounding him:

fray Bernardino de Sahagún de la orden de Sant Francisco, residente en el Convento de Tlatilulco de edad de se[te]nta y tres años y dixo quel viene a dezir y manifestar

Figure 8.3. *A* tōnalpōuhqui, *"counter/teller of the days," shows the sign corresponding to the date of a child's birth in a codex (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 1, f. 277v [4.14]). Drawing by Rodolfo Ávila.*

*por descargo de su conciencia . . . que por esta Nueva España anda una obra que todos entienden que es de fray Toribio Motolina [*sic*] o de Benavente fraile de su orden en la qual justifica la adivinança que los yndios de esta Nueva España tenían, lo qual declara para que se advierta de ello y se rremedie si conviniere*

[Friar Bernardino de Sahagún of the Order of Saint Francis resides at the Convent of Tlatelolco, seventy-three years of age, and states and manifests so as to ease his conscience . . . that in this New Spain a work circulates which everybody understands as being [the work] of Friar Toribio Motolinía or de Benavente, a friar of his order, in which he justifies the soothsaying that the Indians of this New Spain had, which he declares to warn about it, so as it may be remedied should it be convenient]. (Baudot, 1991, p. 129)

It should be recalled that Sahagún's accusation took place several years after the death of Friar Toribio Motolinía in 1569.

The Indian divinatory calendar recurred in the writings and endeavors of Friar Bernardino de Sahagún. It appears in the *Primeros Memoriales* [First Memorials], compiled in the years 1558–1561, which includes a chapter on the *tōnalpōhualli* (Sahagún, 1993, ff. 286r–303r), and again in book 4 of the *Florentine Codex*, written around 1576; his interest in indigenous calendars would last until the end of his life. Sahagún wrote a *Kalendario Mexicano, Latino y Castellano* [Calendar in Mexican, Latin, and Castilian] and an *Arte Adivinatoria* [Art of Divination] in 1585 (Bustamante García, 1990, pp. 372–382; García Icazbalceta, 1954, p. 383), preserved in the volume known as *Cantares Mexicanos* [Mexican Songs] (1994, ff. 100r–125r). In his *Kalendario*, Sahagún remarkably alters the structure of the pre-Hispanic solar calendar—incorporating five twenty-one-day months—so as to put an end to the *nemontēmi* (the five fateful days closing the 365-day year) and the superstitions linked to them (Bustamante García, 1990, p. 373). His *Arte Adivinatoria* is preceded by a prologue where he severely censures the first evangelization carried out by the Franciscans, stating for instance that the Christian god was accepted by the Indians yet worshipped alongside pagan gods,

> *conforme a la costumbre antigua que tenían que quando venia alguna gente forastera a poblar cerca de los que estauan ya poblados quando les parecía tomaban por dios al dios que traían los rezien llegados*
>
> [abiding by the ancestral custom they had, that when foreigners arrived to live near those that were already settled, when they saw fit they would take the god that the newcomer brought as their god]. (García Icazbalceta, 1954, pp. 382–383)

He expresses his profound pessimism, concluding that

> *esta Iglesia nueva [en la Nueva España] quedó fundada sobre falso, y aun con haberle puesto algunos estribos, está todavía bien lastimada y arruinada*
>
> [this new Church (in New Spain) was founded on spurious grounds, and even after having shored it up, it is still damaged and ruined]. (p. 383)

Also in his prologue to his *Arte adivinatoria*, Sahagún provides several instances of the persistence of idolatry amongst evangelized Indians and warns other members of his order of the need to know the old indigenous religion so as to fight it. Good instances of his persistent denunciation of the idolatrous nature of the divinatory calendar are provided in passages where he recommends refraining from certain practices:

Ni cuando nacen vayan a preguntar al agorero (que se llama Tonalpouhqui) por la ventura del que nació, ni crean lo que dicen los agoreros o Tonalpouhques acerca de la ventura de los que nacen, que todas son palabras del diablo y todas son mentiras

[Neither should you ask the soothsayer (who is called tōnalpōuhqui) when children are born what their fate might be, nor should you believe what the soothsayers or *tōnalpōuhqueh* say about the fortune of those who are born, for they are all the words of the Devil and they are all lies]. (García Icazbalceta, 1954, p. 384)

In fact, Sahagún explains that Friar Rodrigo de Sequera described to him how "the Moors from Granada," after baptizing their children in the church, "*tornan a baptizar a las criaturas en sus casas, según el baptismo mahomético*" [baptize them again in their homes, observing the Muslim baptism] (García Icazbalceta, 1954, p. 383). This is a very interesting fact. Let us remember that Sequera was the Franciscans' general commissioner and that he literally saved Sahagún and his Nahua collaborators' work by taking it to Spain when the Spanish administration, under King Philip II, forbade works on ancient New Spain, as well as indigenous language translations of texts for evangelization (Baudot, 1969). Sahagún (2000, Vol. 2, p. 473) actually profusely thanks him for his help in finalizing, in this difficult context, the *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España* [General History of the Things of New Spain]. Unfortunately—with the exception of the Sahagún fragment quoted above—we do not have any further news on Sequera's work among the Moors from Granada (Baudot, 1969, pp. 51–52). Be that as it may, the Spanish friars' experience with the Moors undoubtedly sets an important precedent for the New World's evangelization (Garrida Aranda, 1980; Hamann, 2010).[9] Going back to the quote in the *Arte Adivinatoria*, this shows us that Sahagún had taken seriously Sequera's warning about the Moors' attitude toward their children's baptism.

In order to prevent that kind of behavior amongst Indians in New Spain, the knowledge of the indigenous divinatory calendar and its function, above all in naming children, was essential. This explains some of Sahagún's eagerness to record the various names of "pagan" gods, with the clear purpose of not letting the Indians adopt them (Olivier, 2002, p. 68). Thus, when speaking about four aspects of the goddess Tlazolteotl, Sahagún (2000) explains that:

Destas cuatro diosas tomaban y toman sus nombres las mujeres mexicanas, que son Tiacapan, Teicu, Tlacu, Xuco. Conviene quitárselos

Figure 8.4. *Tezcatlipoca, "Lord of the Smoking Mirror," was the supreme god of the Nahua pantheon (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 1, f. 10r [1.1]). Drawing by Rodolfo Ávila.*

> [Mexican women took and take their names from these four goddesses that are Tiacapan, Teicu, Tlacu, Xuco. It is advisable to take these away from them]. (Vol. 1, p. 122 [1: appendix])

Sahagún (2000, p. 245) also tells us that children born on special days—for example, *cē miquiztli* [1 Death]—would be named after gods associated with these dates (figure 8.4):

> *el mismo día que nacían le baptizaban y le ponían nombre . . . Y si era varón el que nacía, poníanle por nombre Míquiz, o Yáutl, o Ceyáutl, o Nécoc Yáutl, o Chicoyáutl, o Yaumáuitl. Dábanle uno destos nombres ya dichos que eran todos de Tezcatlipoca, y decían que al tal nadie le podía aborrecer, nadie le podía desear la Muerte*

> [If, at this time, someone were born, then they bathed him and gave him a name. . . . If a boy had been born, they therefore called forth (as his name) Miquiz, or Yaotl, Cenyaotl, Necoc Yaotl, Chicoyaotl, or Yaomahuitl. So they placed on him a name of Tezcatlipoca. Of this one it was said: "None may wish him harm: none may wish him to die"]. (1950–1982, Pt. 4, p. 34; 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 367–368 [4:9])

Furthermore, the fact that the nobles or "principals" adopted a deity's name is mentioned. For example, after enumerating a list of twelve pulque deities, Sahagún contends that "*hasta hoy duran estos diabólicos nombres entre los principales*" [to this day, these diabolical names persist among the principals] (2000, Vol. 1, pp. 124–125 [1: appendix]). Thus, the Franciscan's interest in documenting the Nahua's divinatory calendar had the purpose of eradicating their persistent "idolatrous" practices, which influenced his way of presenting indigenous testimonies.

Notwithstanding this, did Sahagún's description of the *tōnalpōhualli* actually correspond to its effective use in the pre-Hispanic period? As Eloise Quiñones Keber (2002) aptly observed, book 4 of the *Florentine Codex* contemplates not the complex ritualistic divinatory processes conducted by the *tōnalpōuhqueh* but the outcome of consultations similar to European almanacs (see also Díaz, 2020, pp. 360–365). In fact, according to Quiñones Keber (2002, pp. 266–267), "the texts and images of Book 4 drastically attenuated what were undoubtedly regarded as the pagan aspects of the *tonalamatl* that is deities and divination. They accentuated instead more innocuous aspects, such as the naming and bathing of newborn children, which had some correspondence to Christian rituals."

It could, therefore, be inferred that Western approaches could have exerted some influence on the writing of book 4, for instance via the *repertorios de los tiempos* (almanacs) circulating in New Spain at the time. These *repertorios* contained, amongst other topics, predictions at birth based on star signs that were similar in some respects to those linked to the *tōnalpōhualli*. Some *repertorios* were even translated into Nahuatl, such as the manuscript found alongside a copy of the *Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Mexicana*, published in 1553 by Friar Pedro de Gante (López Austin, 1973), and later texts such as Manuscript BNF-Mex 381, held by the National Library of France (Tavarez, 2012, pp. 236–249), and Manuscript 3523–2, kept at the Tropenmuseum of Amsterdam (Wichmann & Heijnen, 2008).[10] Furthermore, the library of the Colegio Imperial de la Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco held a copy of the *Chronographia o Repertorio de los Tiempos* by Jerónimo de Chaves, published

in Seville in 1566 (Mathes, 1982, p. 33). A collation ought to be carried out of the predictions contained in the Spanish *repertorios* and those recorded not only in Sahagún's work but also in other sources such as the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, the *Codex Vaticanus A*, the *Codex Borbonicus* or in the writings of Diego Durán.[11] Indeed, these documents contain brief divinatory notes, quite similar to the style used in the *repertorios*.

In terms of Sahagún's Nahua collaborators, curtailing the part played by divination could be a form of avoiding delving into sensitive matters which could lead to accusations of idolatry. In the same period, the authors of the *Codex Mexicanus* drew inspiration from the Spanish *repertorios*—they included zodiacal elements and even a "zodiac man" in some plates—as Lori Boornazian Diel (2016) has demonstrated. However, according to her, in one part of the manuscript dealing with the calendar "presumably, additional information pertaining to the sacred features of each *trecena* [thirteen-day cycle] would have been added, but in the *Codex Mexicanus*, the pages are now mostly blank with only faint traces of imagery visible under the gesso coating. The original contents may have been whitewashed at some point in the manuscript's history, perhaps because of fears that such information would be deemed suspect by Spanish authorities" (p. 442).

To end my contribution on Bernardino de Sahagún's attitude toward Nahua divinatory practices, I would like to highlight a most peculiar instance, where Sahagún surprisingly comments with unusual flippancy on the customs which he had firmly condemned in other parts of his work. Thus, in the first part of book 11, which deals with animals, he translates or summarizes in Castilian the beliefs of his Nahua collaborators regarding animals. For instance, his collaborators describe auguries linked to encounters with a certain type of large cockroach called *pīnāhuiztli* (1950–1982, Pt. 12, p. 89 [11.5]) (figure 8.5). The vermin could announce that something shameful would happen to the one who saw it—the related word *pīnāhuiliztli* means "shame" (Molina, 1880/1970, Pt. 2, f. 82r)[12]—or perhaps the encounter meant death, or something in their favor. Sahagún's comment is quite unexpected: "*Pones aquí en la letra, el razonamiento que haze el que topa a algunas destas savandixas es graciosa*" [Put here in writing the reasoning of someone who stumbles upon this creepy-crawly; it is funny] (2000, Vol. 3, pp. 1049–1050 [11.5]). We must admit that the text is unclear: does the word *graciosa* [funny] refer to the creature? Could it be a spelling mistake using the female adjective (which would apply to the creepy-crawly) and should it be read as the masculine *gracioso* referring to the Indian's "reasoning"? Sahagún seems to have forgotten that predictions linked to the *pīnāhuiztli* had also been recorded in book 5, on auguries, where it is

Figure 8.5. *Seeing a* pīnāhuiztli *was generally considered a bad omen (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 3, f. 246r [11.5.8]). Drawing by Rodolfo Ávila.*

mentioned that a cross is made on the ground to speculate on the direction the creature would follow (1950–1982, Pt. 6, pp. 169–170 [5.8]).[13] Yet in the prologue to book 5, Sahagún did declare:

> *por caminos no lícitos y vedados procuramos de saber las cosas que nuestro señor Dios no es servido que sepamos, como son las cosas futuras y las cosas secretas. Y esto a las veces por la vía del Demonio, a las veces conjecturando por los bramidos de los animales o garridos de las aves o por el parecer de algunas sabandijas*
>
> [we try through illicit and forbidden ways to know of the things which our Lord God has not willed that we should know, such as the things of the future and secret things. And this is (done) sometimes by way of the Devil, sometimes guessing by the howls of the animals or the cries of the birds or by the appearance of some vermin]. (1950–1982, Pt. 1, p. 63; 2000, Vol. 1, p. 435 [5: prologue])

How may we explain the fact that he considers "funny" how the Indians react when they see a *pīnāhuiztli*? This seems quite bewildering. Could he be

Figure 8.6. *The Cihuateteo were deified women who had died in childbirth (Sahagún 1979: Vol. 1, f. 271v [4.11]). Drawing by Rodolfo Ávila.*

expressing disdain toward their "silliness" or "childishness"? When referring to the Cihuateteo, deified women who had died in childbirth, he exclaimed: "*Es esta adoración de mujeres cosa tan de burlar y de reir, que no hay para qué hablar de la confutar por autoridades de la Sagrada Escriptura*" [This worship of women is such a laughable and preposterous thing that there is no need to talk about having it confuted by the authorities of the Holy Scripture] (2000, Vol. 1, p. 122 [1: appendix]) (figure 8.6).[14] Or else, it could be a case of carelessness on Sahagún's part that the Tribunal of the Holy Office would not have hesitated to condemn. Could Sahagún's interest in the customs of his collaborators—in this case not so different from European beliefs in terms of auguries linked to animals[15]—have turned into attraction so that he found them even amusing? Could Sahagún have swapped his implacable role as the scrutinizer of indigenous idolatry for that of a curious observer, even partaking in the sense of humor of his collaborators? Plus, should this be the case, by humorously commenting on the auguries, the Christian Nahua perhaps conveniently tried to present themselves in the eyes of the friar as no longer attached to their lapsed

beliefs of long ago. We can consider the existence of a similar attitude among informants to Dominican Friar Diego Durán (1995), when he asked them about their funeral customs: "*hacian tanta multitud de ceremonias y niñerias que los mismos indios se rien y espantaban de ver tanto juguete y niñerías en que sus antepasados estribaban*" [they carried out so many ceremonies and child's play that the Indians themselves laugh and are frightened to see such playfulness and childishness in what their ancestors espoused] (p. 178).

Without a doubt—and lacking a clear declarative context—it is extremely hard to choose from among the different hypotheses proposed to explain Friar Bernardino de Sahagún's amusement by the *pīnāhuiztli* augury. Either way, I think it illustrates the ambiguity of Christian answers to the phenomenon of divination in general and, in particular, to Mesoamerican divination practices—a topic that warrants more systematic research (Olivier, 2012). This anecdote also reflects the Franciscan's doubts, born of the prolonged coexistence with his collaborators, regarding the level of civilization the Indians achieved, the Devil's influence on their customs and beliefs, and finally their ability to become faithful Christians. To analyze Sahagún's perception of the Nahua's divinatory calendar and their divinatory practices also brings us to the interpretative models required by the friar. We find a mix of references: to Greco-Latin antiquity, the way of defining and classifying Mexica gods, for example (Laird, 2016; Olivier, 2016); to the Bible and to the Church Fathers, Saint Augustine especially (Botta, in this volume); and to popular Spanish beliefs, a set of references from which Sahagún variably establishes a network of explanations to understand or judge the ancient Nahua as well as the indigenous Christian neophytes. The topic of divination reveals these various postures, displaying Sahagún as an attentive scrutineer and eradicator of native ritual practices, but also, perhaps, sensitive to the indigenous sense of humor, a little-known facet of the complex dialogue that took place between the friar and his Nahua collaborators over the years.

NOTES

1. "*Desmamparó el espíritu que inspiraba a Apolo las respuestas, esta cueva y lugar [Delfos] donde se respondía, y fue su camino a otras regiones remotas que no se sabían. Y así podemos creer que huyendo de todas las partes donde se predicaba el Evangelio, se vino a estas Indias, y hasta que acá se predicó había los mismos oráculos y engañaba con sus respuestas a estas gentes míseras*" (Las Casas, 1967, Vol. 2, p. 429).

2. Furthermore, Robin Lane Fox (1986, pp. 370–371) mentions the case of Zosimus from Phrygia, in the second century, "a Christian, using Homer and the Bible to answer questions by random selection or lot."

3. The use of divination books—such as the *Book of Saint Cyprian* or the *Oracle or Book of Destinies*—with similar procedures—opening the book at random—is documented among certain contemporary Mexican indigenous peoples, such as Oaxaca's Mixtec and Chocho, and Guerrero's Nahua. The ritual throwing of grains of corn on the book for prophetic purposes is also documented, a technique of pre-Hispanic origin that has been combined with this European mantic practice (Anders, Jansen, & Pérez Jiménez, 1994, pp. 99–105; Ruiz Medrano, 2017, pp. 468–478).

4. "*Genethliaci appellati propter natalium considerationes dierum. Geneses enim hominum per duodecim caeli signa describunt, siderumque cursu nascentium mores, actus, eventa praedicare conantur, id est, quis quale signo fuerit natus, aut quem effectum habeat vitae qui nascitur*" [The genethliacs were given such a name because they pay close attention to the day of birth. They describe the horoscope of men following the twelve signs in the sky; and according to the course of the stars they attempt to predict the newborn's customs, facts, and events; that is, under what sign was one born and what effect it will have on one's life] (Sevilla, 2004, pp. 706–707). See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 95.3 (as cited in Ryan, 2011, p. 30).

5. For example, according to the *Siete Partidas* [Seven-Part Code] by Alfonso X (1252–1284), referring to divination accomplished by the aid of astronomy, "the conclusions and estimates derived from this art are ascertained by the natural course of the planets and other stars, and are taken from the books of Ptolemy and other learned men, who diligently cultivated the science" (5:1431; as cited in Ryan, 2011, p. 93). Along the same lines, in his renowned *Tratado de las Supersticiones*, published in 1541 in Salamanca, Pedro Ciruelo (1986) includes in the "*segunda parte que trata de la nigromancia y de las otras artes diuinatorias*" [second part on necromancy and other divination arts], a chapter titled: "*Capítulo tercero arguye contra la falsa Astrologia: Poniendo diferencia entre ella, y la otra que es buena ciencia*" [Third chapter arguing against false astrology: Showing the difference between it and the other which is good science].

6. Las Casas (1967, p. 426) also highlights the value of free will before astral determinism when, speaking of Apollo, he notes: "*Traía en otros errores los hombres, gravísimos, cuantos podía; uno de los mayores era dar a entender en sus respuestas que las constelaciones forzaban las voluntades, deshaciendo la potestad y libertad del libre albedrío*" [He had others committing mistakes, most serious, as many as he could; one of the biggest was to imply that the constellations forced wills, undoing the authority and liberty of free will]. Later on (p. 438), the Dominican friar uses the renowned Ptolemy quote: "*vir sapiens dominabitur astris*" [a wise rule for the stars], meaning that the influence of planets or celestial bodies does not govern free will.

7. For the role of the fight against the Devil in the friars' chronicles about New Spain, see Ragon, 1988.

8. Other friars praised the indigenous divinatory calendar: for example, the interpreter of *Codex Vaticanus A* (Anders & Jansen, 1996, facsimile, f. 54r), Friar Pedro de los Ríos, used the *tōnalpōhualli* as an example to size up the level of civilization that the Indians has reached: "*Della qual cosa si conosce che questa gente non era cosi bestiale, como alcuni la facevano; poichè teniano tanto conto et ordine nelle cose loro, et usavano il medesimo mezo, che usano gli astrologi, et i medici fra noi altri*" [From this it is known that these people were not so brutish as some have portrayed them; as they had their things accounted for and in order, and used the same means that the astrologers and physicians among us use].

9. See, for example, the letter dated November 20, 1555, that was sent to the Council of the Indies by the provincial father and distinguished friars of San Francisco de México, including Bustamante, Ruiz, Gaona, Olarte, Motolinía, Focher, etc., in the context of a fight between the regular and secular clergy in New Spain: "*cuando se ganó el reino de Granada los primeros ministros que aquella iglesia tuvo fueron los religiosos de nuestra orden e comenzaron a plantar la fe, con gran fundamento de vida y doctrina, y después la codicia puso clérigos, alzaron los religiosos la mano de ellos, y ya sabrá vuestra alteza lo que han aprovechado en la cristiandad, pues se están tan moros como el primer día*" [when the kingdom of Granada was won, the first ministers of that church were friars of our order and they began to plant the faith, greatly grounded in life and doctrine, and afterwards greed put in the clergy, the friars raised their hands, and your Highness already knows of how they have taken advantage of Christianity, because they are as Moorish as they were on the first day] (as quoted in Garrida Aranda, 1980, p. 52).

10. We also find a Nahuatl translation of the zodiac signs, with their meanings, in a text by Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin (1997, Vol. 2, pp. 126–129) and even a Yucatec Maya translation of a zodiac, with all its predictions, in the Chilam Balam of Ixil (Caso Barrera, 2011, pp. 168–209).

11. In fact, Diego Durán (1995) establishes an interesting parallel between indigenous divinatory codices and the Spanish *repertorios*: "*por tener estas figuras [del* tōnalpōhualli*] á unas por buenas á otras por malas á otras por indiferentes así como nosotros lo hallamos en nuestros repertorios escritos de los signos de zodiaco que unos en sus influencias son buenos y otros malos y otros indiferentes*" [for having these figures (of the *tōnalpōhualli*) for better or for worse or for indifferent such as we find in our written *repertorios* of the zodiac signs, where some have a good influence, others a bad one, and others are indifferent] (Vol. 2, p. 232).

12. Sahagún's Nahua collaborators (1950–1982, Vol. 6, pp. 156–157) use the term *pīnāhuiztli* in the sense of "shameful" when they describe a pregnant woman who had sexual relations with her husband during pregnancy.

13. Another example is found in the minutes of an inquisitorial process dated 1537, in which the accused Andrés Mixcoatl interpreted the appearance of a *pīnāhuiztli* as: "*luego vido venir, parece que de alguna parte que había basura, una sabandija á manera de cigarra, salvo que no tenía alas, este se llama en su lengua pinauizty, y luego en pos de esta sabandija, salió otra á manera de araña, que se llama tecuantocatl; luego el dicho Andrés Mixcoatl los mató á las dichas sabandijas, y el dicho Andrés dixo á la gente que estaba allí: 'estas sabandijas que visteis, significa que me han de prender presto la gente de la iglesia*'" ["after seeing it come, from some place that had garbage, it seems a bug shaped like a cicada except with no wings, which is called *pīnāhuiztli* in his language, and behind it came another shaped like a spider, which is called *tēcuāntocatl*; then the aforementioned Andrés Mixcoatl killed said bugs, and the aforementioned Andrés told the people there that: 'these bugs that you saw mean that the people of the Church will soon imprison me'"] (González Obregón, 2002, p. 65).

14. Likewise, when describing the worship of the Tepictoton, gods of the mountains, Sahagún (2000, Vol. 1, p. 75) comments that: "Esto más parece cosa de niños y sin seso que de hombre de razón" [This seems more like a childlike, brainless thing than something from a man of reason].

15. For example, see the *Tratado de las Supersticiones* by Pedro Ciruelo (1986, pp. 52–55) and its chapter on the role of animals as omens in sixteenth-century Spain.

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9

A Version of the Millennial Kingdom in the Portería *of the Franciscan Convent in Cholula, Mexico*

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At the present, scholars have not sufficiently studied certain artistic works from the Franciscan convents[1] built in New Spain and their connection to the millenarian doctrines adopted by the Order of Friars Minor. The *sotocoro*[2] painting in the church in Tecamachalco (Puebla, Mexico) stands out for its connection to this ideology. Indeed, the apologetic meaning and significance of biblical images found there can only be fully appreciated when analyzed within a millenarian and Joachimite framework. In a recent study, I identified the image of Ezekiel's wheel (Ezekiel 1), designed by the Benedictine monk Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202) and included in his *Liber Figurarum* as the most direct model for the composition of the Tecamachalco *sotocoro* (Fontana Calvo, 2016). This image turned out to be exceedingly important since, for Fiore, it represented the arrival of God's chariot, which would usher in the third age of the world and humanity, the age of the Holy Spirit, similar to the millennium foreseen in the Book of Revelation.

In the mural paintings of the *portería* of the convent of San Gabriel at Cholula, however, the millennium is interpreted differently, to give hope not to the living but for the dying and with an eye on the prize they will enjoy in the afterlife, as explained in the following pages. In a previous study, I analyzed the decoration of the aforementioned *portería* based on the prophecy of the kingdom of peace found in Isaiah 11:6–9 (Fontana Calvo, 2013). In this study, I offer a more detailed and

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c009

broader interpretation in which I contextualize the *portería* within the ideological scope of the Order of Friars Minor, as well as the experience lived by indigenous people during the last third of the sixteenth century.

THE MURAL PAINTING OF THE *PORTERÍA* AT CHOLULA

The convent of San Gabriel, in San Pedro Cholula, Puebla, was founded around 1529 (Maza, 1959, pp. 61–62), although the current church was built between 1549 and 1552 (Kubler, 1983/1992, p. 562), and the paintings studied below must be of the last third of the sixteenth century in their finished version. Their subject matter takes on special meaning in accordance with one of the functions that the *porterías* acquired in the New Spanish convents, as reported in the Constitutions of the Province of the Holy Gospel, in their 1569 compilation. These rooms and other public places in the convent served as confessionals for sick Indians (García Icazbalceta, 1889, p. 154). The paintings at Cholula were designed to offer the dying a paradisiacal image of the prize they were sure to reach in the afterlife.

The term *portería* refers to the conventual access space, conveniently controlled by a door, the opening and closing of which is in the charge of a friar or another person acting as doorman. In the case of Cholula, this area is located behind the western portal, composed of three arches. To enter the convent, one first enters the aforementioned portal, then through the *anteportería* and finally the *portería*, which connects directly with the convent, the cloister, and its dependencies. In it is the authentic door of the convent, which communicates directly with the cloister. Both the *anteportería* and the *portería* have openings (now closed) that connected with the church and that could have originally been confessionals; in them the friar would stand on the church side, and the sick in the entrance to the convent (figure 9.1).

The *portería* of Cholula still preserves elements of its exceptional decoration (figure 9.2). Today there are fragments of what probably were two different pictorial programs in grisaille, which are thematically related and were surely painted in close succession. The northern wall and part of the southern wall still have well-preserved vertical bands with vegetable ornament, which were used to divide the surface of the wall and which must have belonged to the first decorative program. A different painting is featured on the eastern wall and a short section of the southern wall, where these simple bands probably have been replaced with painted columns, with strings of plants arranged in spirals. Furthermore, the blank space between the divisions has been filled with the representation of a peaceful grove. In the margins of

Figure 9.1. Anteportería *from the former portal of pilgrims, with the* portería *behind it. Franciscan convent in Cholula. Photograph by Adrián Mendoza.*

the room, two friezes also run across the wall: the upper frieze, which is associated with a Franciscan cord motif, and the lower frieze, which is just above the baseboard; both appear to belong to the first decorative scheme. The western side of the *portería*, which leads to the *anteportería*, is completely occupied by a large basket-handle arch with two trumpeting angels painted in the spandrels.

Murals depicting landscapes are also found in other convents of New Spain. In various rooms such paintings can be found, serving as either the background in a Calvary or on their own as the sole focus of the viewer's attention. That said, the painted garden in Cholula's *portería* represents a paradise that should be distinguished from more typical scenes such as the *hortus conclusus* [enclosed garden] found in the convent's cloister (Badenhorst, 2009). Indeed, in the *portería* we encounter a different sort of allegory. To make the point succinctly, let it suffice to say that at the base of the two complete preserved columns in the painting, the viewer finds two reclining animals, a jaguar and a stag, the first of which stands out for its touches of color. As we shall see later in this chapter, these two animals are loaded with meaning.

Figure 9.2. *Eastern wall of the* portería. *Franciscan convent in Cholula. Photograph by María Celia Fontana Calvo.*

While there is no direct documentary evidence that allows us to date the two pictorial programs, the following analysis suggests that the painting belongs approximately to the final third of the sixteenth century. In 1568 the provincial gathering of Franciscans got together in Cholula, since it was the second largest convent after San Francisco in Mexico City (Kubler, 1983/1992, p. 562). It is possible that the first version of the paintings of the *portería* at Cholula was renewed for this event.

Next, the two pictorial programs are studied in a related way, because it is considered that the second (the grove with the animals), qualifies what is expressed in the first, the most important elements of which are the decoration of the cloister door and the friezes. The analysis of the paintings begins with them.

THE BUD OF JESSE'S TREE

The most important tree found in the painting is the smallest, although it is strategically placed above the door that leads to the cloister. Furthermore,

Figure 9.3. *Painting depicting lions with unicorn heads, protecting the bud of Jesse's tree from the archer of death. It is found above the door leading to the cloister.* Portería *of the Franciscan convent in Cholula. Photograph by María Celia Fontana Calvo.*

it does not represent a fully grown tree, but rather a tender bud that needs protection. It is in the center of an emblematic composition that is horizontally divided into two registers (figure 9.3). The lower section is found on the sloping surface on the inside of a basket-handle arch, where we find a sort of underworld dominated by a skeleton, the *muerte arquera* [archer of death], who is flanked by two crowned skulls with snakes and crossed tibiae. This macabre skeleton is prepared to shoot one of his terrible arrows into the register above, where we find a vulnerable tree, which is shown as a branchless trunk with only a few acanthus leaves with fruit clusters. The archer's deadly arrows could never hit the tree, since two fantastic guardians, each of which has the body of a lion and the head of unicorn, hold up a large strapwork shield that would intercept any arrow.

Accordingly, this sapling will not yield to Death's attack, since it is not mortal but rather belongs to the spiritual realm and is immortal. Indeed, it is a sacred object, even though it does not symbolize the cross of Christ but rather a different element of deep messianic significance: the branch of Jesse where the spirit of God, in the form of Christ, resides (Isaiah 11:1–2). In the Book of Revelation (22:16), the root and lineage of Jesse plays an important eschatological role, considering that it is worthy of opening the book and its seven seals (Revelation 5:5). In the *portería* at Cholula, Jesse's tree is given prominence and is placed high on the wall as an allusion to God's holy mount (Isaiah 25:6–9).

As mentioned above, the branch is protected by two visually striking lions with unicorn heads that could come from Psalm 22, in both the Latin text of the Vulgate and the Greek version of the text. According to Saint Justin, in this Psalm Christ on the cross turns to the Lord in order that his soul [*unicam meam*] be saved from the mouth of a lion and the horns of unicorns (Psalms 22:22) and hence from eternal death (Justin. *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 105.1–2; Granados, 2005, pp. 365–367). For Pope Gregory I in the sixth century, Christ, whose divine essence could not be destroyed, was chosen as the only man who could save the world (Gregorius Magnus, 1971 [*Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam* 6]).

Saint Justin's interpretation of the psalm sets the stage for the depiction of these fierce beasts in Cholula, where they have been converted into ideal guardians of the sole vessel of God's spirit: instead of going on the attack, these fantastic animals surrender to his greatness. The lion, the protector animal par excellence, is also an emblem for Jesus, because as the Messiah he also incarnates the lion of Judah's tribe (as cited in Charbonneau-Lassay, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 35–53). Furthermore, Dom Leclercq has argued that the unicorn can also serve as a symbol for Christ, the pure among the pure (as cited in Charbonneau-Lassay, 1997, Vol. 1, p. 343). In Cholula the attempt to create the strongest (lion) and purest (unicorn) possible protector animal is patent, and to a certain extent this creation serves as a reflection of the charisma of a convent's inhabitants, the Franciscan friars, men as strong as the lion in their tasks of evangelization and pure as the unicorn, almost angelical.

Just as Jesse's branch, where the spirit of God resides, plays a leading role in Isaiah 11, so too does it form the centerpiece of the entire *portería* composition. The following analysis argues that the upper frieze, and the later arboreal decoration found on the eastern and southern walls, depict two prophetic episodes that are closely connected to one another; furthermore, and in accordance with the type of concordances that were so beloved by Joachim of Fiore, the two depicted episodes were foreseen in the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation: the peaceful rule of the new David (Isaiah 11:1–9) and

Figure 9.4. *Top and bottom: motifs found in the upper frieze depicting the glorification of the witnesses to Christ and the punishment of the impious or for the gods of the old religion.* Portería *of the Franciscan convent in Cholula. Photographs by María Celia Fontana Calvo. Center: Roman sarcophagus dating to the second half of the third century (National Roman Museum—Baths of Diocletian). Image retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sarcophagus_imago_clipeata_Terme.jpg*

its eschatological analogue, the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4–5) after the opening of the fifth seal (6:9–11), and then the millennial reign of Christ with his elect (20:2–7), during which all exiles would return to their homes and unite around Jesse's root (Isaiah 11:10–16).

THE SOULS OF THE INDIGENOUS WITNESSES TO FAITH ARE GLORIFIED LIKE THOSE OF THE GENTILES

As was alluded to above, the *portería* at Cholula contains a frieze in which two powerful representations are juxtaposed (figure 9.4). In the first, two

angels with grotesque features raise up the image of an indigenous man, like a portrait on a *clipeius* (round shield), while in the second, two monstrous birds vainly seek the lush fruits placed in a beautiful container. Both motifs find precedents in the art of classical antiquity and, despite their originality, are not unparalleled in the New Spanish context. Indeed, the same motifs are also found in the Franciscan convent in Tecamachalco, where they undoubtedly are endowed with the same eschatological meaning, because although these forms belong to pagan antiquity, they have been moralized and Christianized.

In these images the natives wear the *ayate*, which, as Muñoz Camargo (1892, p. 9) explained, was a typical garment worn before the conquest. Furthermore, since the portraits take the form of busts, this traditional garment comes to closely resemble the Roman *paladumentum*, which was also fastened at the shoulder, revealing the corresponding arm. After the evangelization, Franciscans introduced new types of clothing for men, but this traditional lightweight cape maintained its place in indigenous society and was worn by individuals belong to all social classes (Escalante & Rubial, 2004, p. 497). What is particularly noteworthy in the Cholula frieze is that the *ayate* is used as a visual shorthand to differentiate the indigenous peoples from the Spaniards.

The similarity between these representations of indigenous people and the classical models was undoubtedly intentional and allows for two things: first, to establish a connection between the indigenous population and gentiles, that is, to unite the paganism of antiquity with that of New Spain; second, to glorify the Christianized natives by means of a Roman motif. The consideration of the New World natives within the human race and their filiation was a very important theological question. Motolinía (2014) reflects the lack of definition about this and makes clear his opinion:

> *Algunos españoles, considerados ciertos ritos, costumbres y cerimonias de estos naturales, los juzgan ser de generación de moros; otros, por algunas causas y condiciones que en ellos ven, dicen que son de generación de judíos; mas la más común opinión es que todos ellos son gentiles*
>
> [Some Spaniards, considering certain rites, customs, and ceremonies of these natives, judge them to be related to the Moors; others, for other causes and conditions which they see in them, say that they are related to the Jews; but the most common opinion is that they are gentiles]. (p. 15)

Given this consideration, the most important celebration pertaining to the birth of Christ was the Epiphany, during which the indigenous were

represented as the Wise Men, the gentiles to whom the divine and messianic nature of Christ was shown (Surtz, 1988, pp. 333–344). It was quite convenient to categorize indigenous people as gentiles, that is, as men who had never known the word of God and, in the best of circumstances, lived in accordance with the law of nature: in Motolinía's words, "*gentiles idólatras y sin conocimiento alguno de su majestad [de Cristo]*" [idolatrous gentiles and lacking any knowledge of (Christ) his majesty] (Motolinía, 2014, p. 345). This freed them from the negative burden carried by the Jews, as some prominent Franciscans had repeatedly insisted (Monsalvo Antón, 2013). For the Christian, the Jew was the deicide who had not wanted to recognize in Jesus the Messiah of the prophecies. The Franciscans in New Spain considered that, within the system of natural law by which the indigenous people were thought to have lived, one could find traces of the true God which would have especially entrusted the conversion of the gentiles to Christ. It seems that Motolinía recalls the text from Isaiah about God's expectations of his "suffering servant," whom he identifies as Christ. God was not going to be contented with the conversion of the Jews; on the contrary he asks that "*se extienda el precio de tu redención a la redondez de la tierra . . . quiero que seas por mí enviado, saluda a todos los gentiles y por ti reciban la luz de la verdadera fé*" [the price of your redemption be laid out around the Earth. . . . I want you to me my envoy, greet all the gentiles and may they receive through you the light of the true faith] (as quoted in Motolinía, 2014, pp. 367–368).

The busts of the natives in this frieze are shown within a shield in a way that parallels the *imago clipeata* [representation/portrait on a shield] (see Macrob. *Sat*. 2.3–4). Furthermore, the shields are lifted by angels (derived from the winged geniuses), according to how the images of the deceased rise in ancient Roman sarcophagi. By using this iconographic model, the implicit glorification is transferred to the indigenous people. The use of the *clipeus* in heroic representations is well documented in Greece and in Rome, where it was adopted in the late Republic, both in public and funerary contexts, as a means to represent an apotheosis. In Rome, such *clipeus* originally depicted deities and deified individuals and hence were used in the Imperial cult from the Augustan period onwards (Beltrán, 1999, p. 83). In funerary contexts, the *clipeus* was incorporated into sarcophagi from the second century CE and was understood as a symbolic allusion to the apotheosis of the deceased. In instances where figures like Erotes, Victoriae, centaurs, or tritons held up or presented the *imago clipeata*, the composition alluded to the deceased's success, understood in the broadest of terms and as a victory that the honorable obtained at the time of death (Hidalgo & de Hoz, 2003, p. 546).

Figure 9.5. *Bird-soul threatened by two monstrous fish held on leashes. Lower frieze of the* portería. *Franciscan convent in Cholula. Photograph by María Celia Fontana Calvo.*

The use on Roman sarcophagi of *imago clipeata* was continued in the Middle Ages, a fact that not only led to the endurance of its motifs and meaning but also allowed it to be taken up as a model in new appropriate circumstances. But the reuse of this artistic motif at Cholula is quite unusual, since it recaptures the entire original logic of the *imago clipeata* and makes use of all the associated meaning and significance. More than an adaption, it constitutes an *aggiornamento*, a bringing up-to-date. The image is designed to show how the angels protected the souls of the indigenous from lurking dangers (the angels are shown stepping on plant-like monsters with giant mouths that rival those of Leviathan) (figure 9.5). The souls remain honored atop a sort of thrones with backs like scallop shells, which is a likely allusion to the chairs reserved in the heavens for the chosen, mentioned in the Book of Revelation (7:4). The Baptistery of Neon in Ravenna (fifth century) presents under the dome a colonnaded portico in a pleasant garden with a series of empty thrones housed by

scallop-shell niches, all of them around that of Christ in the *hetoimasia*, "the preparation of the throne" for his next coming as judge, a common theme in Byzantine art.

Friar Gerónimo de Mendieta described the terrible situation that the native population endured at the end of the sixteenth century, when people were dying in droves due to the diseases and work overload to which they were subjected by the Spanish. Nevertheless, according to Mendieta, the epidemic was a punishment meant not for the indigenous peoples but rather for the Spaniards, who would lose the labor force that sustained their opulent and greedy lifestyle. The Franciscan's lamentation contained an important consolation, because the Indians died after being rescued with the last spiritual aid, including the absolution of sins, provided in the *portería*. In Mendieta's opinion, this was a sign of the imminent end of the world:

> *Y así de las pestilencias que entre ellos vemos, no siento yo otra cosa, sino que son palabras de Dios que nos dice "Vosotros os dais priesa por acabar esta gente; pues yo os ayudaré por mi parte para que se acaben más presto, y os veáis sin ellos, si tanto lo deseáis." Y en una cosa vemos muy claro que la pestilencia se la envía Dios, no por su mal sino por su bien, en que viene tan medida y ordenada, que solamente van cayendo cada día solos aquellos que buenamente se pueden confesar y aparejar . . . De donde podemos colegir, que sin falta va hinchiendo nuestro Dios de ellos las sillas del cielo para concluir con el mundo*
>
> [And concerning the plagues that we see among them, I can only feel that they are God's words saying "You hurry to finish off these people; I shall aid you so that they finish more quickly, and you shall find yourself without them, if you want it so much." And we see one thing very clearly: that the plague is sent by God, not to harm them but to benefit them, as it comes with such measure and order, that each day only those fall who are able to confess and prepare themselves. . . . From this we can gather that our God surely is filling the chairs of heaven with them to end the world]. (1997, Vol. 2, p. 201 [4.36])

Mendieta, in this lament for the incessant movement of the sick and dying, seems to have in view the corresponding images of the conventual atrium included in the *Rhetorica Christiana* by Diego de Valadés (1579/1989, p. 107). Both the written testimony and the engraving show a dramatic situation corresponding to a very specific time, given the interest in showing the prize that corresponded to the deceased Christian Indians in an especially difficult time for them: the last third of the sixteenth century, the time when the murals of Cholula probably acquired their current appearance.

Nettel (1993, p. 45) rightly identified the church literally carried on the shoulders by the Franciscans, in the atrium of Valadés's engraving, with the church of the Holy Spirit, due to the large dove depicted in its interior. Furthermore, Valadés depicted over this church a Deesis with the Trinity in the *Compasio Patris* [Compassion of the Father] style. This was likely meant to comfort the sick who were on their deathbeds, since it invokes the pity of God and his intermediaries. For Mendieta, the natives who died in such circumstances went directly to the "chairs in Heaven," which the fallen angels had left empty and which are visually represented in the Cholula frieze containing the souls. In the Christian tradition, these seats are reserved for the martyrs, and therefore the natives are martyrs.

This idea is already found in Saint Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior Sancti Francisci* [The Life of Saint Francis of Assisi]: a companion of Saint Francis experienced an ecstasy that revealed the truth of this matter, when he was praying alongside the saint in an abandoned church. As he gazed at the heavens and saw many thrones, among which one stood out for being more resplendent and adorned with precious stones, a voice spoke out to him, explaining that the throne had belonged to one of the fallen angels and was now reserved for the humble Francis (Guerra, 1985, p. 417 [6.6]). Coronel (2018, p. 722) has shown that, according to his *Doctrina Pueril* [Puerile Doctrine] (1274–1276), Ramon Llull (1232–1311) believed that the triumph of the saints would take place when they filled all of the empty seats from which the demons had fallen, since at that moment the general resurrection would arrive.

This line of thought is developed in the Book of Revelation (6:11), where those who died for expressing their faith were told by God to rest a while, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who were to be killed as they were, should be complete. The text goes on to explain that the first resurrection is reserved for these individuals (Revelation 20:4–5). In Cholula, this resurrection is shown as imminent for the worthy who are depicted on the *clipeus*, since in the spandrels of the oval arch found on the western wall, there are two angels who are already sounding their powerful tubas. This act is surely meant to summon the souls to their judgment (Matthew 24:31, 1; Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 8:2).

This eschatological episode is related to the messianic prophecy of Isaiah (11) about the reign of Christ that serves as the scriptural basis for all of the Cholula decoration studied in this chapter. The passage in Isaiah 11:4 describes how the spirit of the Lord, clothed with all his gifts, will judge the weak with justice and decide with righteousness for the meek of the earth.

THE PUNISHMENT FOR IMPIOUS SOULS OR THE GODS OF THE OLD RELIGION

The composition prepared for the witnesses to the faith in the frieze is linked to an opposed, negative image: several birds with ugly pointed feathers, curved necks, and snouts filled with teeth instead of beaks cannot reach the ripe and abundant fruit before them. These birds may depict the antithesis of the just souls, because formally they are drastically in contrast with the beautiful birds (mostly doves and peacocks) that peck at some of the Christological symbols (grapes, pomegranates, or the Chrismon) associated with eternal life. They played an extremely important iconographic role in Christian funerary art from the beginning of the faith. All are commonly found in catacombs and continue to be found on sarcophagi dating to the High Middle Ages. They can, however, also allude to the gods (or demons, according to the friars) of the old religion, which until the arrival of Christianity would have collected—but not taken advantage of for the salvation of the natives—their fruits (virtues and good works) (Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 1, f. 2r [prologue]).

In any case, the grotesque birds from Cholula are shown as unable to snatch the fruits that they so desperately seek. The weakness of their necks symbolizes their lax morality. They do not manage to firmly resist the demon's onslaught, as Saint Paul advised his followers to do (Ephesians 6:10–13). Indeed, these ugly creatures lack the shield of faith and obviously are not awarded the virtue of strength, which is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and with which the bud of Jesse's tree was endowed (Isaiah 11:2). Their lack of virtue prevents these birds from overcoming their sins. In visual terms, they are unable to penetrate the powerful vegetable volute that stands between them and the food that they so covetously desire.

The abovementioned vessel and its contents deserve special attention: the vessel is made of a series of elements that resemble the parts of the columns painted in front of the grove in the *portería*. The foot is made of acanthus (as the base), the belly is wrapped with large leaves, and the vessel's neck is reminiscent of a capital with a sort of triglyph motif in the section corresponding to the echinus. It is, fundamentally, an abstraction of a new tree with acanthus leaves and round fruit, which will be discussed in relation to the columns mentioned above. As symbols of the Eucharist that provide eternal life, the food of the vessel appears to be reserved for the chosen, and hence others are prohibited from enjoying it.

Little remains of the room's lower frieze, painted on top of the red ochre baseboard, but it is also present, with some variations, on both floors of the cloister; thematically, it is closely related to the one we have just discussed. The main motif is a pair of vegetable-fish that the angels try to stop from devouring

Figure 9.6. *Grove and colonnade on the western wall.* Portería *of the Franciscan convent in Cholula. Photograph by María Celia Fontana Calvo.*

a bird. The position of the bird seems to be imported directly from the eagle that appears on some Roman sarcophagi below the *clipeus*, such as the one dating to the second half of the third century CE from the Baths of Diocletian, now housed in the National Roman Museum. In Cholula, as in early Christian art, extracted from its original context, the bird represents the soul that, as will be explained, is in danger of being attacked by the surrounding beasts.

A WOODED PARADISE FOR THE BIRDS

The section of landscape painting in the *portería* creates a tapestry effect, which is only kept from being truly immersive by the unnatural tones of the grisaille (figure 9.6). This second decorative version would likely only have

been developed in this part, which is a thematic complement to the first. The image with its columns, grove with birds, flowers, and perhaps mushrooms (Ashwell, 2003, p. 6) can all be interpreted symbolically.

From the beginning of Christianity, birds were used as emblems for the martyrs and, more specifically, their souls. In an analysis of First Corinthians, where Saint Paul distinguishes the different types of bodies for men, animals, birds, and fish, the second-century author Tertullian associated the martyrs with the flesh of birds (Tert. *Re res. carnis* 52). Indeed, for this Church Father the flight of birds is reminiscent of the liberation of the martyrs' souls ascending to the heavens. For that reason, the birds that adorn Christian graves from the time of the martyrs could even be labelled with the names of the deceased (Charbonneau Lassay, 1997, Vol. 2, p. 518). Soon the dove was connected to the martyrs, since its whiteness is that of the clothing bestowed on the martyrs just before their glorification (Revelation 6:11). In the Cholula mural, however, birds of the family *Psittacidae*, including New World parrots, provide a quite apt symbol for the indigenous populations, who the Franciscans thought of as "martyrs" in the etymological sense of "witnesses," just like the *decollati* (beheaded) and *interfecti* (slain) of the Book of Revelation (6:9, 20:4).

The gardens filled with birds from the catacombs find parallels in several illustrations from the *beati*, which are also meant to allude to the martyrs as they happily await the resurrection. In the eighth century, Beatus of Liébana firmly believed that the end of the world was impending: everywhere, ruin reigned and the Church of God was under attack. It was a time of the sort of persecution and suffering described in the Book of Revelation. In face of such a dire situation, this text provided some hope, since it assured that the suffering would soon end and that the just would have their due reward. According to Beatus, just before the end of time, Earth would experience the millennial kingdom of the Church (as cited in González, 2009, p. 130).

While there is not any illustration of the first resurrection in the *beati*, since it is an uncomfortable idea that could easily lead to heresy, the opening of the fifth seal (Revelation 6:9–11) is depicted below the altar of Heaven, not below an earthly one—with the martyrs, who, after asking for justice, await the necessary number of companions so they can receive their prize.

For our present purposes, the image in the *Emilianense Beatus*, which dates to the tenth century and is currently housed in the Spanish National Library, is especially important (figure 9.7). In the composition three birds are placed above a vegetable element that is framed by an arcade. For Antonio Cid (1984), with these birds "*posadas en jugosas plantas, el artista quiso sin duda evocar la idea del paraíso, con lo que se apartó de la representación estricta del texto sagrado*"

Figure 9.7. *The opening of the fifth seal (Revelation 6:9–11) as depicted in the* Emilianense Beatus *(first half of the tenth century). Drawing by María Celia Fontana Calvo.*

[perched on juicy plants, the artist surely wanted to evoke the idea of paradise, by which means he diverged from the strict representation of the sacred text] (p. 64). Near the bodies of the *interfecti* found below the altar (which, in this case, are *decollati*, in line with Revelation 20:4), the painter added the enthroned figure of Christ along with the abovementioned idyllic garden filled with plants, birds, and multilobed arches, representing Heaven. This figurative design is well suited to depict the "beatific vision" or, in other words, the joy that the angels and the souls of those who died in God's grace experience when they gaze directly upon Christ before being judged. According to Duns Scotus, the joy that provides perfection is achieved through this beatific vision (Elías, 2013, p. 74).

The birds in the Cholula grove, which are placed near the bud of Jesse's tree, seem to be awaiting the first judgment and the first resurrection, in the company of the divine, in the garden of Heaven and without the threat of any danger.

THE COLONNADE WITH HELICAL GARLANDS

The columns painted in front of the trees present shafts wrapped by a vegetable stem that gives them an aspect very close to Solomonic columns. These supports form a harmonic sequence where certain animals settle placidly and present two of the characteristics that Saint Augustine attributed to peace: order and tranquility (August. *De civ. D.* 19.13). For this Church Father, peace is the very name of happiness, the aim of human aspiration, both for the individual and for society (Álvarez, 1960, p. 50).

Twisted columns with different kinds of decoration were born in the Palestinian art of the Hellenistic period and remained constant until the Middle Ages, both in architectural works and in illustrated codices. Following Tuzi (2016, p. 234), the early widespread popularity of this form throughout Europe long before the second half of the fourteenth century forces us to think about its symbolic potential. The use of spiraling columns in the medieval period evokes—at least in certain contexts—the Temple of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, since at that time the mythical temple was believed to have had such columns.

In the *portería* at Cholula, the columns are not properly Solomonic, but they are very similar as they also possess, as has been said, a prolonged vegetable element arranged helically. In the Middle Ages, a support wrapped in a vegetable bud alluded to the miraculous resurrection, and this is how Aaron's rod (Numbers 7) was represented in the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* [Mirror of Human Salvation] (Yale University Library, Beinecke MS 27, fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, f. 22r). This twisted plant in Cholula appears to generate more than one sort of product: spherical fruits in clusters (like the eucharistic grapes) and unitary spheres with protuberances at their bases, more difficult to identify.

These spherical fruits play a special role, since they appear on the capitals and bases of the columns, together with the large elliptical leaves with serrated edges that are characteristic of the cultivated acanthus. The story of the origin of the Corinthian order, recounted by Vitruvius in the first century CE, closely associated these leaves with the world of the dead, reaffirmed them as a symbol of immortality, and gave fame to the Greek sculptor Callimachus, who systematized them and interpreted them in stone (Vitr. *De arch.* 4.1, 8–9).

What is important is that the clear association between the spherical fruit and the acanthus is not coincidental, given that the same pairing is also found in the very different context of the monumental frieze in the Augustinian church in Ixmiquilpan, where the leaves and fruit serve as loincloths for some members of the band of victorious warriors. Furthermore, these fruits are greedily sought by the birds at Cholula, as discussed above.

Throughout the Western tradition there are many examples of fabulous trees. The prophet Ezekiel announces that, on both sides of the river of the New Jerusalem, there will be trees of evergreen leaves and inexhaustible fruits, renewed every month. The fruits will serve as food, and the leaves for healing (Ezekiel 47:12). The version of this theme in Revelation (22:2), conveniently updated, allocates the healing function of the leaves especially for gentiles.

In the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*, one of the most widespread apocalyptic pre-Christian rabbinical texts, there is a mention of a very special fragrant tree that is beautiful to behold, has ample, elegant foliage, and possesses attractive fruit. It is found next to the seventh mountain, which is God's throne (24.3–4, 25.3). From there, the archangel Michael says:

> 25.4 And this beautiful and fragrant tree, and no creature of flesh has authority to touch it until the great judgment, when he will take vengeance on all and bring everything to a consummation forever, this will be given to the righteous and the humble.
>
> 25.5 From its fruit, life will be given to the chosen; towards the north it will be planted, in a Holy place, by the house of the Lord, the Eternal King.
>
> 25.6. Then they will rejoice with joy and be glad in the Holy place. They will each draw the fragrance of it into their bones, and they will live a long life on Earth, as your fathers lived. And in their days sorrow and pain, and toil and punishment, will not touch them. (McCracken, 2010, p. 40)

The prototype of the tree of life and its variants described in Ezekiel, the Book of Revelation and the *Book of Enoch* could have inspired not only the painting of Jesse's tree in Cholula, but the columns and vases found there. In the mural analyzed here, after the first resurrection the smell of its fruits would feed the chosen from among the indigenous people.

OPPOSED ANIMALS: THE JAGUAR AND THE STAG

In the foreground in front of the two remaining columns in the *portería* of Cholula, we find two large animals that are meekly reclining: a jaguar and a

Figure 9.8. *Jaguar and stag reclining in front of the columns.* Portería *of the Franciscan convent in Cholula. Photographs by María Celia Fontana Calvo.*

stag (figure 9.8). Given the observable pattern, it is safe to assume that there must have been another animal resting in front of the third column, but unfortunately all traces of this animal have been lost along with the painting's lower section. That said, the animals that we see are not the original ones, since, as Ashwell (2003, p. 5) has pointed out, below the stag we can still glimpse traces of a polychrome jaguar.

Both the jaguar and the stag are key elements in the composition, due to their symbolic importance in the pre-Hispanic worldview. The jaguar is, of course, the preeminent predator. Due to its habits, this large feline was associated with the night, darkness, and, in accordance with the Mesoamerican belief system, the humid and cold forces of the Earth and the different spheres of the underworld. The jaguar is identified as "the heart of the mountain" and "the lord of the echo." Furthermore, the jaguar is connected to the night, the night Sun, and the rain and is also one of the *nahuales* [animals alter ego] of the shamans (Olivier, 1998). For the Olmecs, the jaguar was their ancestor and justified their royal ascendance. Sixteenth-century Franciscan chroniclers stressed the ferociousness of the jaguar; Sahagún (1979, Vol. 3, f. 155r) called it a tiger and named it king of all animals (see González Torres, 2001, pp. 123–144).

The stag is associated with hunting and sacrifice. It is a symbol for prey and is connected to the Sun. While by the beginning of the sixteenth century hunting had long ceased to provide the bulk of nourishment for Mesoamerican communities, the ritual hunt continued to be an operative concept due to its association with sacrifice via the flower war. Olivier has discussed the last hunting expedition of this type, which was carried out by Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin on October 23, 1518, on Mount Zacatepetl, where the prey, including stags, were

captured and then sacrificed to the gods. In Mesoamerica the flower war was meant to nourish the Sun and the Earth with the blood of sacrificed warriors. But in Huichol culture, where human sacrifice never took root, the blood of the stag continued to serve as the preeminent offering for the Sun (Olivier, 2015, pp. 17–19, 280–281).

These two quintessentially American animals came to be associated with the tiger and the deer, which were also understood as epitomes of opposed forces in European bestiaries. The tiger's ferocity connected it to Christian notions of the forces of evil; for this reason, the *Physiologus* [The Naturalist] claims that it is similar to the serpent (Guglielmi, 2003, p. 32). The deer, on the other hand, provides an allegorical image of Jesus Christ and Christianity, and accordingly is associated with good. Its enemy is the serpent (of original sin) whom it unremittingly pursues. Beginning in the fourth century with Saint Ambrose until the thirteenth with Saint Buenaventura, the deer was an emblem of Christ, who squashed the infernal snake (Charbonneau Lassay, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 241–242).

Isaiah (11:6–9) provides a clue to help understand the meaning with which the jaguar and stag painted at Cholula were endowed. According to the prophet, after the judgment made by the spirit of God, a period of great peace would arrive. The image employed in Isaiah to drive home the importance and profundity of this peace is the harmonious coexistence of animals that are traditionally contrasted as hunters and hunted: the wolf will live peacefully beside the lamb, the leopard will rest with a goatling, and the cow and bear will live together, since there will be neither violence nor pillage on the holy mount of the Messiah.

As the preserved animals in the Cholula mural show, autochthonous animals were painted to represent this scene from the Old Testament in an adaptation to the reality of New Spain from the Franciscans' point of view. In this sense Motolinía (2014) wanted to show the reasons why the indigenous professed a special love toward the brethren of his order, having the natives express these arguments:

> *Porque éstos andan pobres y descalzos como nosotros, comen de lo que nosotros, asiéntanse entre nosotros, conversan entre nosotros mansamente*
>
> [Because these people go about poor and barefoot like ourselves, they eat like us, they sit among us, they talk among us peacefully]. (p. 178 [3.4.310])

Doubtless these actions remind us of those of Isaiah's animals and their roles: the friars could have attacked the indigenous people, but instead, according to

Figure 9.9. Peaceable Kingdom, *Edward Hicks, ca. 1834. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Edward_Hicks_-_Peaceable_Kingdom.jpg*

Motolinía, they meekly mixed with them, as equals. The Franciscans, unlike other Spaniards, were neither proud nor aggressive, but as humble and peaceful as the men of the New World.

THE ALLEGORY OF THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM FOR THE HOLY GENTILES OF THE NEW WORLD

Millennialism was not totally cast aside by those who held Protestant beliefs. On the contrary, those who sought out the truth of their ideas also sought to prevail over old beliefs, so as to come to a better world that was essentially peaceful. The Quaker minister and artist Edward Hicks (1780–1849) painted more than sixty versions of the *Peaceable Kingdom* to memorialize the birth of an idyllic Quaker community in Philadelphia in 1681 (figure 9.9). This

community was the brainchild of William Penn, who saw it as an undertaking that would become a model for all the world's nations (Bourne, 2002). Hick's paintings always contain two important images: on the left side of this one we see the signing of the treaty of peace and friendship with the natives of Delaware in Shackamaxon that took place in November 1682, while on the right side in the foreground this fact is shown as an allegory: there is an array of animals, some wild and others tame. They live in peaceful harmony and are governed by a child. The painting's composition allows the viewer to visually understand that mutual respect between the old and new inhabitants of the American lands would be the seed of, and foundation for, the peaceable kingdom. This thought was taken into the world of New Spain by Motolinía, as shown in the quote at the end of the preceding section, about the peaceful relationship between the friars and the indigenous people.

The colonnade with the animals at Cholula is devised around the same theme as Hicks's paintings, though with key differences. In the first place, the iconic elements in the mural are more complex and not as obvious as they are in the Quaker paintings, where the scene is directly lifted from Isaiah (11:6–9). And indeed, Jehovah's Witnesses have employed the same visual efficiency as Hicks had in their own representations of the millennial kingdom: often in these illustrations the peaceful landscape is depicted as a sort of garden for New Jerusalem. But in Cholula those who will reap the benefits of this new kingdom (i.e., the indigenous people, painted on the *clipeus* of the upper frieze, who had been witnesses to Christ and the word of God) are depicted in order to clearly show the promise of the first resurrection laid out in the Book of Revelation (20:4–6). As explained above, these individuals were considered gentiles on theological grounds, and this circumstance justified the adaptation of both the *imago clipeata* from sarcophagi, as a means to show their glorification, and the prophetic allegory from Isaiah, to which the indigenous population was bound, as will be explained in a moment.

The *Sibylline Oracles* are a collection of prophecies that arose in Jewish circles and played a propagandistic role. They are exceedingly important for understanding what Sibylline divination could be in the Greco-Roman world and in the official religion of Rome (Caerols Pérez, 1989/2011, pp. iv–v). Furthermore, these texts interact with the apocalyptic theme by their claims and subversive nature (Suárez de la Torre, 2001, pp. 246–247). For our purposes, book 3, which was traditionally attributed to the Sibyl of Eritrea or the Sibyl of Cumae, and which contains the oldest kernel of the collection (Suárez de la Torre, 2001, p. 249), is of special interest. The text predicts that oppressive Rome would fall and a new period of peace for eastern peoples would arise in

its wake. The Discalced Carmelite Friar José de Jesús María (1652) referred the prediction in the following way:

> *En tiempo largo, después que muchos años dieren vuelta, se dexarán las adargas y escudos, y servirán las lanças y los dardos de leña para el fuego . . . No temerá la tierra las armas, ni el tumulto de la guerra, quando del alto empíreo embie Dios al Rey porque todo el mundo goçará de tanta paz que juntos y mezclados parecerán los leones y corderos, y con las ternerillas habitarán los osos siguiendo sus piaras*
>
> [A long time from now, after many years have rolled by, they will put down their shields, and their lances and arrows will be burned as firewood. . . . The land will not fear weapons, nor the tumult of war, when God in the heavens shall send the King, so that all people should enjoy such peace that, mixed together, they shall seem like lions and lambs, and the bears shall live with the young calves, following their herds]. (p. 531)

After a series of destructive civil wars, the Roman poet Virgil hoped that in the aftermath of the Battle of Actium (31 BCE) there would be a new, peaceful world providing a worthy abode for humankind (González, J., 2007, pp. 10, 16). Among Christians, Virgil was believed to be a sort of prophet due to Eclogue 4, in which he uses the *Cumaean Verses* (l. 4), which refer to the above-mentioned Sibylline prophecy. He goes on to announce the birth of a child who would govern a peaceful and just kingdom (pp. 44–45). Of course, the declaration from Isaiah (11:18–23) parallels the uncultivated and good-natured spirit that prevailed in this kingdom where tame flocks of sheep would no longer fear lions.

THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM FOR THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD PAINTED IN CHOLULA

In the field of Catholic iconography, there are hardly any artistic creations that visually represent the two dominant themes found in Cholula, the first resurrection and the millennium with its Old Testament parallels. From the beginning of the Christian tradition, both doctrines proved to be extremely controversial: though they found a scriptural basis in the Book of Revelation, they were never incorporated into Catholic dogma. On the contrary, the Church followed the precedent set by Saint Augustine and strictly rejected these ideas. The great doctor of the Church rejected the literal interpretation of Revelation and instead proposed an allegorical reading of the biblical promise of the messianic kingdom that would endure for a thousand years. In his

opinion, at the end of time Heavenly Jerusalem would be the destined place for the chosen, and in this holy city "the resurrected along with their Prince, the King of the centuries" would all congregate "and rule eternally with him" (August. *De civ. D.* 15.1–2). In no way did Saint Augustine believe that the New Jerusalem would exist on the physical plane during a historical period.

Nevertheless, during the Middle Ages, oppressed and rebellious people, for different reasons, firmly believed that those who had given faith to Christ during the tribulation would enjoy a happy period on Earth as a reward, as the Book of Revelation expresses. Among these individuals, we must include the first Franciscans who arrived in New Spain. The famous group of twelve friars, with Martín de Valencia as their leader, belonged to the reform of Friar Juan de Guadalupe, who offered for his followers a radical interpretation of Franciscan charisma. In what he calls "torture," Andrés Martín recounts the lives of the followers of Guadalupe from the death of the reformer until a select group of them were sent to the westernmost part of world (1991, p. 150). General Friar Francisco de los Ángeles, the frustrated evangelizer of New Spain, imparted his expectations and plans, which were laid out in the *Instrucción* [Instruction] and the *Obediencia* [Precept], both of which were given to Friar Martín de Valencia shortly before the latter friar left Spain in 1523.

Maravall (1948, pp. 202–204) has analyzed the Franciscan utopia of a tutelary government that would control the native population, both religiously and politically, in a way that suited their docility. If the friars studied the local language and history, it was in an attempt to know what would be a good starting point to found a golden age; thanks to the natural and primitive state of the men found there, the Franciscans expected to have more success with these new Christians than with the old ones back in Europe. Taking up an old requirement, Mendieta demanded the complete separation of the natives and Spaniards:

> *Débese considerar esta república de la Nueva España que consiste en dos naciones,* scilicet, *la española y la de indios . . . [que] son repúblicas independientes*
>
> [It should be considered that this republic of New Spain consists of two nations, that is to say, the Spanish nation and that of the Indians . . . which are independent republics]. (as quoted in Maravall, 1948, p. 206)

The Franciscans suffered, since they knew that the indigenous people had lost due to their contact with the Spaniards:

sin comparación era mejor su estado y consideración y manera de vivir antigua, como tuvieran la fe y sacramentos que tienen, que su ser y estado de ahora

[without comparison, their condition and consideration and old way of life were better, since they had the faith and sacraments that they have, than their present being and state]. (as quoted in Maravall, 1948, p. 206)

For Maravall (p. 215), these ideas are tinged with Savonarolism. In the 1950s, however, Marcel Bataillon and John Phelan pointed out that the will to create the world's third age, in the tradition of Joachim of Fiore, was implicit in the Franciscan project. In 1950, Bataillon (as cited in Herrejón Peredo, 2000, p. 192) saw traces of a prophetic Joaquinism in Friar Martín de Valencia, and in 1956 John Phelan interpreted Friar Gerónimo de Mendieta's *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana* [Ecclesiastic History of the Indies] as a lament for the situation the missionary work of the Friars Minor found itself in at the end of the sixteenth century, unable to attain the coveted third stage of history (Phelan, 1956/1972). George Baudot (1983, 1990) developed these ideas, studying the entire Franciscan enterprise from a Joachimite perspective. In reaction to this historiographic tendency, developed fully in the 1990s, theologians and Church historians have not recognized the clear signs of Joachinism in the behavior of the Franciscans, due to their fear that the very claim of heresy that has always dogged Fiore had been implicit in the earliest stages of the evangelization of the Americas (Gómez Canedo, 1990; Saranyana & Zaballa, 1995; Zaballa & Saranyana, 1990). That said, over the last few years studies have resumed the Joachimite theses. Especially noteworthy is the work of Fontana Elboj (2016) who, through the study of medieval millennialism, connects and differentiates the Franciscan plan that was carried out in New Spain—that had, in the opinion of the friars, a message of hope for the natives—from the chiliasm that dates to the earliest periods of the Church.

Fiore, a twelfth-century Benedictine abbot, interpreted history progressively and allocated each member of the Trinity a particular age of the world, reserving the last age for the Holy Spirit (Valentinetti, 1998). This is quite similar to the millennium announced at Revelation 20 for the witnesses to God; therefore, for Fiore and in contrast to the position of Saint Augustine, that period, which would have monastic characteristics, would come to pass not in the heavens and after the final Judgment but rather on Earth: he foresaw a communal heaven on Earth that was led by men. Hence the problem.

The Tecamachalco *sotocoro* prepares the indigenous people to enter New Jerusalem (i.e., the very church they were entering) by means of a visual program which, in part, is synthesized in the opposition of the two Augustinian

cities: Babylon and Jerusalem. Respectively, these cities find an analogue in Mexico Tenochtitlan (an Aztec capital before the arrival of the Spaniards) and Mexico City (the Christianized capital)—that is, the place, understood broadly, chosen for establishing a monastic lifestyle for the natives and friars, men who were nearly angelic. But the paintings that are seen in the *porterías* in Tecamachalco and Cholula do not show the community of the living, but rather that of the indigenous deceased, who during the days of the tribulation caused by Spanish abuse and greed would have died after being baptized. Their souls, already glorified, are seen waiting in the Cholula frieze for the impending first resurrection so that they can enjoy an idyllic period of peace with Jesse's root as their sign, in accordance with the prophecy from Isaiah (11). The *portería*, used as a confessional for the sick, is the ideal place to show the dying natives the paradise (the grove) of the beatific vision. This will be the prize for their souls, as painted in the *imago clipeata* portraits, while their bodies—in a dissociation reminiscent of *Emilianense Beatus*—will be buried in the atrium adjoining the convent.

For Georges Baudot, the politico-religious Franciscan utopia was abandoned at the end of the sixteenth century, "*disminuida en las posibilidades de realización por la instalación progresiva de una Iglesia seglar altamente jerarquizada*" [with diminished possibilities of realization, because of the progressive installation of a highly hierarchical secular Church] (Baudot, 1990, p. 11). However, Mendieta at that historical moment cried out to God, asking the king of Spain to support the monastic project once again. And if in case this call did not work, the Franciscans strove to instill in the natives the hope of a better future, not only in life but after their death, because according to Revelation 20 they, like the martyrs, will be protagonists of the first resurrection and also will enjoy in it a time of perfect peace with Christ, as the prophecy of Isaiah 11 announces. This is how it was promised in the *portería* of Cholula, where the spirit of God resides.

NOTES

This chapter is part of the I+D+i research project HAR2014–57067-P, Religious Acculturation in the Old World and Colonial America, directed by Dr. Francisco Marco Simón from the Universidad de Zaragoza. I would like the give special thanks to Dr. Gonzalo Fontana Elboj for his painstaking revision of this text, and also Dr. Francisco Morales Valerio (OFM) and Lic. Adrián Mendoza Leal, who have provided me with the plan of the convent of Cholula and photographs taken expressly for this research during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. The appropriate term referring to the residence of the evangelical Friars Minor is "convent" and not "monastery." The monastery is where monks live in absolute closure, while the convent is the residence of friars, such as the Franciscans missionaries in New Spain, who carried out much of their work outside its walls.

2. The Castilian term *sotocoro* refers here to the area under the elevated platform (*coro*) in a conventual church where a community of friars meets to pray the canonical hours.

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10

Smoking Stones and Smoking Mirrors

The Limits of Antiquarianism in New Spain

Martin Devecka

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, antiquarianism transformed European scholars' understanding of their past. By contrast, in the colonial context of New Spain antiquarian techniques were surprisingly little employed to write the histories of its inhabitants before the conquest. While Spanish writers saw Mesoamerican temples as buildings that belonged to history, their religious interests blinded them to the antiquarian significance of smaller objects. The eleventh book of Bernardino de Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* (1979, Vol. 3, ff. 152r–404v) exemplifies this blindness: by comparison with its classical models and with contemporary works in Europe, it gives short shrift to material culture and to the production of objects that, in a European context, would have been called art. As a category, "art" was the product of a long process of neutralization that allowed educated Europeans to see ancient cult objects as statues rather than idols. The shock of the New World encounter and Spanish missionaries' anxiety over the completeness or sincerity of Mexica conversion meant that a similar neutralization would not begin, with respect to Mexica cult objects, until well after the close of the seventeenth century.

In a sense, Mexica religion was a thing of the past almost as soon as Europe encountered it. The temples and rites that had simultaneously impressed and terrified the first Europeans to see them were everywhere sacked and extirpated within the first years of Spanish rule. At the same time, as the missionaries who

https://doi.org/10.5876/9781646423163.c010

undertook to convert the inhabitants of the central plateau to Christianity were well aware, Mexica religion persisted in other ways and, so to speak, at another scale. If the Spaniard could destroy large, immobile, and "public" structures like temples (*teōcalli*) and pyramids (*tzacualli*), smaller artefacts with religious significance continued to escape their control. This was one of the modes in which what Jorge Klor de Alva (1980, Vol. 1, pp. 1–13) has aptly called "spiritual warfare" between missionaries and unwilling or partial converts continued through the sixteenth century and after.

This essay's subject is the intersection of such spiritual warfare with the development, on the part of its conquerors, of an antiquarian approach to Mexico. Antiquarianism, broadly defined as an intellectual apparatus for reconstructing the past out of material remains, is a hallmark of Renaissance culture in Europe: from Gianantonio Pandoni's erudite reports on Roman coinage to Flavio Biondo's more literary productions in Latin and Giorgio Vasari's in the vernacular, scholars across a range of disciplines labored to place diverse material objects within a single historical chronology. These same techniques of inquiry travelled to the New World, where their successes and failures have much to reveal about European encounters with alien religions. The antiquarian eye, I'll suggest, was able to fix itself only on objects at a monumental scale, palaces and temples whose function in Mexica cultural practice, not coincidentally, had been vacated by the Spanish conquest of Mexico. It was by contrast less able to focus on smaller objects that remained embedded in Mexica daily life and ritual. At a moment when antiquarians and art historians in Europe were developing a critical sense of the historical dimensions of sculptural form and material, Spaniards writing about Mexico relegated the one to religious polemic and the other to "natural" history.[1]

I believe this state of affairs to be the outcome of a dialogue between Spanish and Mexica religious cultures, so I shall be making my case largely on the basis of the *Florentine Codex*, that most dialogic of early colonial manuscripts. I shall use this text to suggest that precisely the continued use of some classes of objects in Mexica religious ritual—real or imagined by the Spanish—was what blocked European observers from appreciating their antiquarian value. However, I'm going to start by discussing a set of cult objects to which Spanish writers very early began to attach an antiquarian dimension.

FROM TEMPLE TO PYRAMID

The very designation of Mexica sacred architecture as "pyramids" is already an antiquarian gesture, one that integrates them into a European history of

building as analogues to the ancient Egyptian monuments at which Greco-Roman writers since Herodotus had marveled. The first Europeans to encounter these structures drew different comparisons. While soldiers like Bernal Díaz del Castillo, speaking casually, analogized them to the fairy castles of medieval romance, Cortés (1993), whose overriding interest in his *Cartas de Relación* [Letters of Relation] is to win sympathy and legitimacy for his unauthorized expedition into Mexico, compared them to mosques instead. In Mexico Tenochtitlan, he writes, there are "many mosques or houses for their idols," buildings thus athetized as inimical to the Christian faith which are, nonetheless, "very beautiful structures."[2]

"Antiquarian" engagement with Aztec religious architecture on the part of European observers thus begins even before that architecture had been effectively rendered "past" by Cortés's depredations. The Islamic comparison, which might well be read as an assertion of the "contemporaneity" of these Mexica buildings, which it nonetheless characterizes as belonging to a religious other, takes on a chronological dimension as well as soon as Cortés starts comparing them to the "gran torre de Sevilla" [the great tower of Seville]. By thus localizing the point of comparison, Cortés sets these American "mosques" in the frame of the Reconquest of southern Spain, completed only a few decades before. With the arrival of Cardinal Cisneros at Granada and the institution of forced conversion of the Muslims remaining there, the last of the mosques in Andalusia had been postdated as obsolete religious buildings some years before the departure of Cortés from Spain for the New World. They had been destroyed or converted into churches—a fate many temples in America were to share.[3]

That Cortés saw the sacred architecture of Mexico as ripe for conversion into churches on analogy with what the Catholic Monarchs had done in Granada is amply borne out by his treatment of these buildings on the road to Mexico Tenochtitlan. His men threw down cult statues wherever they were able to lay hands on them, putting up altars and crosses in their place. In the first two years of Spanish contact with Central Mexican religious architecture, the conquistadors' program was to convert rather than destroy. This project of conversion still demanded that the Mexica temples be represented, like the mosques of Andalusia, as having been rendered obsolete by Christian conquest. Cortés writes to displace these buildings into a very recent past.[4]

This is denial of coevalness for a practical purpose, that of characterizing the Mexica and their neighbors as legal targets for conquest, in much the same way that the Muslim kingdoms of southern Spain had been. A generation later and with different aims in mind, Bartolomé de Las Casas would radically

expand the chronological gap separating the Spanish invaders from an indigenous architecture that, under Spanish compulsion, had fallen into disuse. Las Casas's procedure throughout the *Apologética Historia Sumaria* [Apologetic Summary History] (1992) is to redescribe the natives of the Americas according to parallels with Greco-Roman civilization, a strategy that both secures their status as a "civilized people" and works to neutralize their superseded polytheisms. Characteristically, he is one of the first writers to draw a link between Egyptian pyramids and Mesoamerican temples. A comparison that seems obvious to modern eyes still strikes him as in need of explanation:

> The tower of this temple somewhat resembles pyramids. For whoever does not know what that is, it will not be unpleasant to explain. It was a high mountain, marvelously worked out of brick, of the shape of a grain heap or a kindled flame . . . that begins thick at the bottom and reduces its thickness as it rises, until it ends in a point. . . . some of these were triangular or of three corners, others of four. . . . some lasted 1,000 years or, according to other authorities, more than 3,400 years, during which time these buildings neither collapsed nor crumbled. (Vol. 2, p. 548)

Las Casas brings a substantial erudition to bear (Isidore of Seville, Pliny the Elder, Diodorus Siculus, and Herodotus) in helping his readers to imagine an unfamiliar form of building with reference to another kind of architecture that, though also outside the experience of most European readers, has at least been well documented in a classical textual tradition that remains within their reach.[5]

His aim in so doing is not only descriptive. He also wants us to see these buildings, which were active sites of worship and sacrifice just decades before he wrote the *Apologética Historia Sumaria*, as age-old monuments to dead founders and heroes. They conform to a type of ancient building that had proven able to endure for thousands of years, honoring men (monumentally) rather than gods (idolatrously). This categorization, which certainly serves Las Casas's apologetic purpose by disconnecting the *tzacualli* that remain intact from the stain of human sacrifice and idolatry, would produce a lexicon for discussing Mexica religious architecture that has endured to the present day.

The movement from mosques to pyramids is a movement into the past, the transformation of the Mexica from a just-defeated enemy into a dead civilization. Las Casas's Egyptianism elevates Mexica civilization to the status of a "classical" culture at the cost of radically ejecting it from the present. Given Egypt's noted double valence in Renaissance culture—as a place at once superseded and home to all manner of secret Hermetic knowledge—the depiction by Las Casas of Mexico Tenochtitlan as an Egypt of the New

World is double-edged: in the case of Egypt, the past is by no means necessarily inferior. It is, however, past. Las Casas defends the peoples of the New World at the cost of deculturing them or of leaving them with nothing but the legacy of an antiquity which he has invented. For Las Casas, the pyramid is an architectural category that absorbs all the temples of New Spain from the Yucatán Peninsula to central Mexico; he makes no stylistic or historical distinction here between the buildings of the Mexica and those of the Toltec or the Maya before them.[6]

Cortés, Las Casas, and other Spaniards writing about the pyramids of Mexico understood these structures within a framework of religious difference: the pyramids articulated (a now past) attachment to an alien (and now extinct) religion. Displaced to pre-Reconquest Andalusia or to antediluvian Egypt, they could be understood in an antiquarian mode precisely by way of the obsolescence that these comparisons expressed. The abandoned temples of Mexico were monuments, not to a form of ritual life that had ceased but to the cessation of that life. The important thing for the Spanish was that all this architecture that had served as settings for monstrous sacrifices terminated under Christian rule (as Marco Simón highlights in his contribution to this volume).

THE SMALL THINGS OF NEW SPAIN

In the Valley of Mexico, at least, few would question the effectiveness of Spanish authority in ending the sacrificial rituals once associated with the pyramids. At smaller scales, legal intervention was much less straightforwardly effective: As Klor de Alva (1980) and others have thoroughly documented, parts of Mexica "private" religion survived the conquest and were supplemented by downscale "privatizations" of preconquest rituals. The material culture that accompanied these practices remained for the most part beneath the notice both of religious authorities and of European antiquarianism. Though they did so in a way that blurred indigenous chronological distinctions, European writers did at least locate Mexican pyramids in a history of forms to which Old World architecture also belonged. Fragments and rocks, by contrast, come to be treated by European observers as belonging to natural history.[7]

The European writers who placed any aesthetic value at all on indigenous Mexica mastery of form can be counted on one hand. Aside from, again, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who compares the painters and feather workers of Mexico Tenochtitlan to Michelangelo and Apelles, there is only Albrecht Dürer, who encounters the treasures of Mexico by chance on a journey through Belgium

in 1520: an exuberant voice crying out in the wilderness. He declares that the sculptures he has seen—a golden Sun and a silver Moon, among other items—are precious things worth thousands of florins apiece, much more than their weight in metal. The Habsburg treasury, assessing their value not as art objects but as bulk metal, had the pieces melted down.[8]

This was the fate of most Mexica craft production in metal that made its way to Europe, not for lack of interest on the part of the priests and inquisitors, whose job it was to ensure the authenticity of native conversions to Christianity during the first decades of the conquest. They rightly perceived that statues or even fragments of statues had been saved by Mexica notables from desecration by the Spaniards, and they supposed that these remnants were still being worshipped in private ritual settings. There are records of Mexica being tried for the crime of using *spolia* from preconquest temples to build their houses; the identification of these blocks as *spolia* supposes at least some capacity on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to recognize preconquest sculptural forms. This practical knowledge comes close to achieving an antiquarian dimension in the writings of Friar Toribio de Benevente Motolinía, one of the twelve Franciscans who reached Mexico in 1524, who explicitly confronts the problem of "converted" Mexica secretly worshipping small or fragmentary idols. He conjectures that the reason those idols, still being confiscated in his own day, show a deteriorated surface is that they have been hidden underground: the inquisitor becomes an archaeologist. And yet, as Giuseppe Marcocci (2017) remarks in a study of this aspect of Motolinía's career, the friar never suspects that these objects appear aged because they are in fact ancient. For Motolinía too, in the end, the idol has no history.[9]

Yet that very word, "idol," applied almost universally by Spanish writers to New World statuary in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, conceals a deeper and more significant misunderstanding. "Idol" is of course a term with a long history in Christian European thought: it marks almost the beginning and end of Christian "art criticism" through the medieval period. One term among many in the Greco-Roman vocabulary for discussing statuary, it was appropriated by Jewish and Christian writers as a key word for describing "pagan" cult images. These writers asserted that the key concepts for understanding such images were form and resemblance, not numen—at least not in the positive sense their worshippers supposed. Cult statuary captured the faces of ancient kings who had been misunderstood as gods; if these stone shells hosted a divine presence, that was only because they served as passing abodes for demons.[10]

In a late antique as well as a Renaissance context, the Christian emphasis on formal resemblance was polemical: to highlight a false outer form was at the

same time to characterize pagan cult images as "hollow," and thus to devalue the precious materials out of which they were often made. This legacy, which conquistador and friar alike brought with them to Mexico, distracted Spanish observers from the essential role that material played in the sacralization of Mexica cult images. Once shattered, those images were thought to be "dead and gone"—except insofar as fragments still bearing traces of an identifiable form were secreted away and circulated among private residences.[11]

The Mexica were unsurprisingly more sensitive to the formal traces visible in these fragments. Excavations at the Templo Mayor, the Great Temple in Mexico City, have revealed that *spolia* from Teotihuacan and elsewhere were a major object of donation to the gods of Mexico Tenochtitlan—deliberately imported, at great cost of effort for the more massive pieces, and deposited among the treasures of the Templo Mayor or placed on its exterior as adornment. The value of such pieces lay in their antiquity, not as such but as bearers of form imposed by human hands. For the preconquest Mexica, this was a "classical" art. The Nahuatl word for "craftsmanship," *tōltēcāyōtl*, implies for what it designates an origin in the ancient Tolteca culture of which the fragments deposited in the Templo Mayor were relics.[12]

A fascinating and much-discussed passage in book 11 of Bernardo de Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* (1979) records the misrecognition of such relic-seeking on the part of a European writer for whom indigenous antiquarianism was unpalatable. Sahagún's Castilian text describes an indigenous method of searching for precious stones, which release a visible vapor near sunrise; he comments that expert gem-seekers often discover boxes of stone in which precious stones have been hidden. The Nahuatl text from which Sahagún's commentary has been derived, however, also remarks that these stones may be "*ye tlayecchihualli*," already crafted, or "*ye petlahualli*," already polished. Both terms are elsewhere associated with human craft production, and they suggest that the objects of description here are not raw materials but fragments or relics (Vol. 3, ff. 354v–356r [11.8.1]).[13]

That distinction, however, belongs to a Spanish conceptual apparatus; the Mexica saw form and material as interwoven, not opposed. Mexica sculptors created sacred images not only by manipulating form, but also (and perhaps more importantly) by selecting materials. Their choice of material conveyed important iconographic information about the numen they were representing, to be sure, but it was also felt, by Mexica viewers, to bring about the presence of the numen in the resulting representation. For Mexica artists and audiences, the stones used in sculpture possessed a history and an animacy of their own that inhered in them whether or not they formed part of a sculptural whole.

In an account that deftly interweaves modern Nahua religious practice with evidence from the decades following the conquest, the anthropologist Molly Bassett (2015) has shown that not only the form but the surface of Mexica sacred images was essential in securing the real presence of the gods. These surfaces, called *īīxiptlah* in Nahuatl, were understood not as images but as skins: the verbal root of the phrase signifies flaying, as literalized for instance in the case of Xipe Totec, "Our Lord the Flayed One." Such a "divine skin," which dressed a statue (or even a human!) in order to make a living god, could be identified primarily on the basis of the materials out of which it had been made.[14]

Among the most important such materials were several that, by their names alone, indicate a numinous presence that transcends human application of form. *Teōtetl*, or jet, is a combination of the Nahuatl word for "stone," *tetl*, compounded with the root *teō*, indicating divine belonging or origin. *Teōxihuitl*, or "turquoise," represents the fusion of the same prefix with a Nahuatl word meaning "flame"; we should envision a blue fire, frozen in stone. *Teōcuitlatl*, meaning "gold" or "silver," is to modern readers the most surprising of all these collocations: the prefix for divinity appears here again, now combined with a Nahuatl word meaning "excrement."[15]

All these stones were particularly valued by the Mexica as components in divine skins, or *tēīxiptlahhuān*: the stones were the matter that made the skin divine. Consider a face mask, now in the British Museum (figure 10.1), of Tezcatlipoca or Tlaloc, composed out of alternating stripes of jet, *teōtetl*, and fine turquoise, *teōxihuitl*; about the material of the eyes, one of several designated as "mirror stone" in Nahuatl, I shall have more to say later. The striped pattern identifying this mask as imaging a god exists as an interplay of two materials that are themselves already numinous. The striped face of a god can not be made from just any stones.[16]

The Nahuatl data on which the preceding analysis is based come from the *Florentine Codex*, a collaborative production of Sahagún and several indigenous informants that offers a compendious description of the human and natural resources of the Valle de Mexico. The eleventh book in particular outlines the natural history of the region, a project for which there were numerous classical antecedents available. As Angel Maria Garibay has shown, one major model adopted by Sahagún was Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis* [Natural History] (1952–1962). Book 11 of the *Florentine Codex* follows an abbreviated rubric generated from books 8–37 of Pliny's work, thereby treating animals, vegetables, and minerals. My interest here is in the last of these categories, which fills the final half of book 11. In particular, I want to highlight Sahagún's suppression of certain aspects of Pliny's own rubric—suppression

Figure 10.1. *A turquoise and jet mask of Tezcatlipoca or Tlaloc. © The Trustees of the British Museum, museum number Am,St.401. Reprinted with permission of the British Museum, London. Retrieved from https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/309983001*

that amounts to a kind of censorship of indigenous ideas about the connection between material and artistic rendering of form.[17]

Sahagún's compendium of Mexica vocabulary for, and attitudes about, precious stones in fact contains almost no reference whatsoever to the formal applications by which these stones might be made part of a larger art object. Pliny, by contrast, is above all interested in just this question: he dedicates nearly half of the thirty-third book of the *Natural History* to explaining the use of gold, its coinage as money, and the history that led to its being used for this purpose. On these topics, and particularly as concerns the history of Roman coinage, Pliny provides a great deal of valuable antiquarian information for which we have no other source. Gold in Rome has tyrannical beginnings: Tarquinius Priscus was the first to honor his son's first kill in battle with a golden amulet, a gesture fossilized in the golden bullae worn by the sons of equites in Pliny's own day. He argues, by reference to historical accounts, that gold was rare in Rome before the third century BCE, when it began to be worn in the form of rings; no Roman thought to coin it until almost the turn of the second century.

The account continues in some detail: a narrative not only of metals and their properties but of the culturally specific forms to which these give rise.[18]

Pliny treats gold as a material invested with a representational and formal history; Sahagún does not. It would be naive of us to credit Sahagún's choice to a concern for brevity in this digressive, twelve-book compendium. I suspect, rather, that Sahagún felt gold had no formal history worth knowing in this New World context. The conquistadors and administrators who made their fortunes by melting down indigenous ornaments and statuary into ingots, as well as the Spanish Crown whose treasuries those ingots then filled, would doubtless have agreed with Sahagún on this point. Sahagún and his fellow missionaries had another reason to leave the art history of the Indies unwritten: for them, such a history would have been nothing but a repository of dangerous idols.

The interplay between images and idolatry in the *Florentine Codex* is complex and difficult to summarize. One of the most visually striking and well-known sections of the codex is the list of Mexica deities at the beginning of book 1, which offers an illustration of each god with his or her associated iconography. While much has been written about this inventory as a means of assimilating Mexica religion to European categories and rendering it comprehensible via a kind of *interpretatio Romana*, scholars have had less to say about the sources and functions of the images it contains (figure 10.2). In fact, even this basic question remains unanswered: what are these pictures pictures of? At least one possibility is easily rejected: comparison with surviving Mexica sacred statuary shows that Sahagún's illustrations cannot be taken as documentary images of an art-historical nature. A stylistic gap separates them, too, from the preconquest codex paintings which they more nearly resemble. The artists' application of musculature to the bare limbs of these deities shows a clear affinity with contemporary trends in European art and marks the images out as hybrid productions, the purpose of which is not so much to document any existing image as to offer an iconographic prototype by reference to which images of a god might be recognized as such. The early modern handbooks of Greco-Roman mythography chronicled by Jacques Seznec (1995) offer a suggestive parallel. There, too, images offer a sense of pure form: rather than representing or repeating any particular artwork, they offer an index according to which other images can be recognized and evaluated.[19]

The first book of the *Florentine Codex* thus reveals a template for recognizing idols but hides the idols themselves. This historical flattening proves diagnostic for the rest of the codex as well. I suspect that Sahagún saw the history of Mexica sculptural forms as either not worth mentioning or unmentionable.

Vitzilobuchtli otro hercules
Capitulo primero. fo. 1.
Tezcatlipuca. otro lupiter
¶ Capitulo tercero. fo. ibidem.
Paynal. vicario de vitzilobuchtli.
Capitulo segundo. fo. ibidem.
Tlaloc Hamacazqui. dios delas pluujas.
Capitulo quarto fo. 2.

Figure 10.2. *Images of Mexica* tēteoh *[deities] from Bernardo de Sahagún's* Florentine Codex, *(1979: Vol. 1, f. 10r [1.1]).*

I can validate these suspicions with reference to another set of materials for which Pliny, again, provides a deep history of forms. I mean marble, the material substrate of Roman idolatry par excellence. Pliny treats this stone in book 36 of the *Natural History*, where he elaborates an account of its mining and origin into the oldest surviving full-blown history of art. From its opening, a diatribe against the luxurious marble columns installed in the house of Marcus Scaurus, Pliny writes with consistent reference to artefacts then still existing—many of them, as he points out, on view at Rome. There one can see a Venus by Phidias which points to the moment at which marble statuary was invented; there, too, a Ceres by Praxiteles, a Diana by Timotheus, and so on. Pliny places these treasures of Rome's imperial museum in a history of style

that attaches them to their places and times of origin. Otherwise, these statues would remain so many *membra disjecta* [dispersed fragments] washed up on Roman shores. For Pliny, an account of the nature of marble could hardly have been complete without a parallel account of its formal applications in the crafting of cult and secular images.[20]

The corresponding rubric appears in Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* (1979, Vol. 3, ff. 361v–363r, 386v–387v [11.8.5]), where his informants are invited to discuss *piedras comunes* [ordinary stones]. The Nahuatl columns of this notionally bilingual manuscript list a variety of rocks that can be worked. By stark contrast with Pliny's elaborately detailed discussion, however, Sahagún's text rarely give us a sense of what might be made from these stones. About the lone exception, *metlatetl*, we are told that it can be used to craft *metates* or hand-mills. This is analytically obvious from the name of the stone: *metlatl*, "hand-mill," plus *tetl*, "stone."[21]

The Nahuatl text of the *Florentine Codex* is accompanied by a running commentary in Castilian which is, for the most part, a translation. On some occasions, however, the contents of the Castilian and Nahuatl texts diverge wildly. Of one of the chapters describing various classes of stones, in fact, Sahagún (1979, Vol. 3, ff. 386v–387v [11.12.7]) translates nothing but the title. On these pages, the column in Castilian contains an apologetic account of a preconquest religious festival that the Mexica have kept up even after their notional Christianization. Sahagún claims that the festival, now conducted without the sacrifices and other ritual concomitants that had distinguished it of old, no longer has any religious content: it has become a commercial occasion, like the fairs of Europe, motivated by avarice rather than idolatry.

While Sahagún's essay offers a great deal of antiquarian information about preconquest ritual practice, as well as a revealing apology for Augustinian conversion methods, it says nothing at all about *piedras comunes*. Given that the Nahuatl here contains nothing particularly scandalous, the most probable explanation for Sahagún's failure to translate it is that he felt it to be of too little interest to a Castilian-speaking audience. By undoing Pliny's interweaving of natural and cultural history, Sahagún produces a text that can have nothing but a lexicographic value, and only for students of Nahuatl; he thus replaces it, on the Castilian side, with an essay in religious history that will be edifying for Mexico's secular governors as well.

To indicate the extent to which Sahagún's approach is an anachronism against the background of sixteenth-century European thought, it would suffice to set the text just discussed in comparison with the opening chapters of Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* (1550/1998), which give at least a formally analogous

conspectus of the *piedras comunes* used by stoneworkers of Vasari's day and in classical antiquity. There, Vasari not only treats each stone according to its physical properties and affordances, but enumerates—sometimes, as in the case of travertine, for example, at great length—the formal uses to which it has been put in the past. If a given type stone is—according to a Renaissance pattern of thought articulated most famously by Michelangelo—a kind of material summation of formal potentials, those potentials are also given and circumscribed by the formal uses to which that stone has already been put. For Vasari and his contemporary interlocutors, the "natural history" of a stone is inextricably also a history of forms.[22]

That the same was true in a slightly different sense for Sahagún's Mexica informants, I have already suggested. Nahuatl speakers had a sense of the "nature" of gold and silver, *teōcuitlatl*, that was strongly colored by the form in which they natively appeared—as resembling excrement or diarrhea, divine in origin. For formal reasons, the Mexica understood these metals as numinous and fit for use in the more intensely numinous *tēīxiptlahhuān* or skins of the gods. Nature and art are, if not identical, at least inseparable.[23]

I conclude this section with an example that will make my point more emphatically. The importance of mirrors (*tezcatl*) in Nahua cosmology and myth has often been noticed by modern scholars. Tezcatlipoca, the major antagonistic deity in the Mexica pantheon, bears a name that means "smoking mirror" and, in preconquest depictions, often wears mirrors as part of his iconographic ensemble. Some accounts describe the Sun after midday as a reflection of the morning Sun in a cosmic mirror. Mexica cosmology contains many such mirrors: writers in the immediate postconquest period describe the Earth, the sky, and the sea as vast reflective surfaces. Several of the omens which are supposed to have warned Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin about the coming of the Spaniards arrived via mirrors: on the sky, on the ground, or on the head of a bird. It would be safe to say that mirrors are a major structuring device in the Mexica world-picture.[24]

Practically all Mexica mirrors were made from burnished stone; what kind varied by region and by function. The *Florentine Codex* embraces all such stones under one heading, identified in the Castilian column as "stone from which mirrors are made" and in the Nahuatl column simply as "mirror" (Vol. 3, ff. 361v–362r [11.8.5]). The Aztec category "mirror stone" embraces a broad range of minerals, likely including both iron pyrite (fool's gold) and hematite as well as some types of obsidian. However, Sahagún's Nahuatl-speaking informants draw strong distinctions within the category "mirror-stone" on something like a formal basis. There are light (pyritic) mirrors which are good to look into,

noble mirrors, the mirrors of rulers. There are also black (hematite? obsidian?) mirrors, bad mirrors, mirrors that distort, that "contend with one's face" (Vol. 3, ff. 361v–362r [11.8.5]). This second class of mirrors not only reflects form, but even transforms and creates it: the dark [*tlāltic*] mirror is negatively defined, in this text, by its failure to deliver a "true reflection."[25]

Yet we know that some mirrors functioned precisely thus in preconquest Mexica ritual: as tools of divination that showed the experienced viewer, not his own face, but something else entirely. Dark mirrors could reveal the future, the past, or faraway places through rites that continued to be practiced—and persecuted—under Spanish rule. These "smoking mirrors" recapitulated on a human scale the enormous, creative mirrors out of which, in Mexica cosmology, the world itself was composed (Taube, 1992, pp. 193–198).

The form of the mirror was understood by Sahagún's Nahua informants to be so closely imbricated within its material substrate that they deployed a category of mineral—the "mirror stone," *tezcatetl*—defined solely by its ability to produce a reflective surface. Like Vasari and Pliny, they were thus conceiving and categorizing materials in terms not of their "objective" mineral qualities but of a formal potential embodied in past usages of those materials. "Mirror stone," like Pliny's gold and marble, is a category with an antiquarian dimension, one which however remains unexplored in Sahagún's manuscript. That it remains unexplored is diagnostic of a blindness, pervasive in the Castilian text of book 11 of the *Florentine Codex*, to the role played in preconquest craft production by the stones that it catalogs. Sahagún could have shown a greater sensitivity to indigenous use of those stones by including in the codex account a history of style for which Pliny's *Natural History* provided several obvious precedents. It only remains to offer an explanation why he failed to do so.

CONCLUSION

Sahagún was not alone among Spanish observers in being unable to integrate the Mexica culture of materials into a generalized history of forms that would embrace both the New World and the Old, but his failure is all the more conspicuous for his reliance on classical models that showed the way toward accomplishing this project. While sixteenth-century European witnesses grasped the "pastness" of indigenous temple architecture, they did not go on to develop an antiquarianism that could categorize and characterize Mexica art objects and materials on smaller scales.

The reasons for this, I think, have everything to do with religion. As I have already suggested, the friars and priests who might have been in a position to

produce antiquarian research on a microscale saw the objects of that research as embodied demons, not as the dazzling artworks for which a distant, accidental observer like Albrecht Dürer was able to take them. The neutral gaze of the art historian—developed in Europe, as Christopher Wood has argued, at the cost of a desacralization of certain holy images that had at an earlier period been understood as offering a true record of Jesus's or Mary's face—was not yet available to friars, who still saw Mexica craft objects as masks for the Devil (Nagel and Wood, 2010, pp. 347–363).

We might further speculate, as the anthropologist Byron Hamann has suggested in another context, that Nahua informants had no interest in supplying the Spanish with antiquarian information that would only have been used to suppress the small-scale ritual practices that they had been able to preserve under colonial rule. The Spanish archaeologists mentioned by Motolinía in a passage that I have discussed above used what knowledge of Mexica sculpture they possessed not to locate that sculpture within a historical sequence but to root out examples of it and destroy them. Mexica witnesses for whom these statues were more than idols might understandably, then, have been reluctant to sharpen the sensibilities of their rulers. If the *Florentine Codex* was a collaborative production, then its failure to develop into more than a "materialistic" natural history is also a collaborative result.[26]

That failure and the forms of cooperation that produced it are both emblematic of the conditions under which religious "contact" took place during the first century of Spanish rule in Mexico. The fairy-tale enchantments to which Díaz del Castillo and his fellow soldiers had proven so susceptible were now either destroyed—in which case they could indeed be understood, correctly, as belonging to the past—or, if they persisted, were looked upon by the Spanish, not as objects with histories, but as troubling signs that they still lived in a demon-haunted world.

NOTES

1. The doctrinaire view that antiquarianism was a product of the later Renaissance (e.g., Momigliano, 1950, p. 285), has undergone a correction and expansion in recent decades to acknowledge antiquarian tendencies in authors writing on the early side of the early modern period (e.g., Grafton, 2012, pp. 24–30; Moyer, 2003). On Pandoni's foundational 1459 treatise on numismatics, see Weiss, 1968, p. 183. On Biondo, see Miller, 2012, pp. 254 and following. On Vasari, see below.

2. For Diaz del Castillo's fantasy castles, see his *Historia verdadera* (1632/2005, p. 159): "*desde que vimos tantas ciudades y villas pobladas en el agua, y en tierra firme*

otras grandes poblazones, y aquella calzada tan derecha y por nivel cómo iba a México, nos quedamos admirados, y decíamos que parecía a las cosas de encantamiento que cuentan en el libro de Amadís, por las grandes torres y cúes y edificios que tenían dentro en el agua." The generic term *cúes*, which he and other early writers used to describe what we would call pyramids in Mesoamerica, comes from the Yucatec Maya *k'u* and counts as an inchoate category for understanding New World architecture in its own terms. The rapidity and completeness with which "pyramid" replaced "*cu*" is all the more striking in light of this. The full Cortés quotation reads: "*Hay en esta gran ciudad muchas mezquitas o casas de sus ídolos de muy hermosos edificios*" (1993, p. 64).

3. "*Hay bien cuarenta torres muy altas y bien obradas, que la mayor tiene cincuenta escalones para subir al cuerpo de la torre; la más principal es más alta que la torre de la iglesia mayor de Sevilla*" (Cortés, 1993, p. 64). The *iglesia mayor* of Seville was a "converted" mosque. On Cisneros and the forced conversion of Andalusian Muslims, see Elliott, 2002, pp. 52 and following. My use of "contemporaneity" and related terms derives, here and elsewhere, from Johannes Fabian's (2014, p. 28) discussion of "denial of coevalness" as a methodological choice in the human sciences.

4. On the "conversion" of indigenous temples by Cortés and his followers, see Klor de Alva, 1980, pp. 43–54. As Diaz del Castillo's (2005) narrative reveals, the process was by no means straightforward. At Tlaxcala, for example, the Spaniards felt that they had to insist on some kind of architectural Christianization but at the same time could not afford to alienate these important allies: "*Lo que les mandamos con ruegos fue que luego desembarazasen un cu que estaba allí cerca, y era nuevamente hecho, y quitasen unos ídolos, y lo encalasen y limpiasen, para poner en ellos una cruz y la imagen de Nuestra Señora; lo cual luego hicieron, y en él se dijo misa, se bautizaron aquellas cacicas*" [We ordered them to immediately dismantle a nearby temple that was newly made, removing some idols, to whitewash and clean it, to place in it a cross and an image of Our Lady; they did this right away, and in it was said the first mass, and those noblewomen were baptized] (p. 133 [77]).

5. On the "controversy of the Indies," see Lupher, 2006, pp. 56 and following. On the functionalization of the "denial of coevalness" to cover colonial exploitation, see Fabian, 2014, pp. 28–30. The full quotation reads: "*porque arriba tocamos la torre deste templo, parecía en algo a pirámides para quien no sabe qué cosa es, será cosa decillo no desagradable. Esto era un monte altísimo maravillosamente labrado de piedra, de hechura de un montón de trigo y de la forma que hace la llama de un fuego encendido (según Sant Isidro, libro 15, capítulo 11 Ethimologias), y humo, que comienza desde su principio grueso y vase cuanto más alto va en su gordor disminuyendo hasta que se remata en punta o en pico; finalmente comienza en ancho y el final del es angosto. Esta es la forma de las pirámides. Algunas de éstas eran triangulares o de tres esquinas, otras de cuatro, y de tales y tan fuertes piedras las hacían, que, según refiere Diodoro, libro 2, capítulo 2, algunas duraron mill años, y según*

otros, más de tres mill y cuatrocientos que aquellos edificios no se cayeron ni fenecieron" (Las Casas, 1992, Vol. 2, p. 548). Peter Martyr could be suggested as an antecedent, since his "*Gran Cairo*" combines Cortés's Islamic with Las Casas's Egyptian interpretation (Lynch, 1967, p. 368). López de Gómara (2018, chapter 194), another early chronicler of the New World, also mentions pyramids—but only once, and in connection with Incan rather than Mesoamerican architecture.

6. On the Renaissance reception of Egypt, see Curran, 2007. Scholars of the early modern period understood Egyptian culture to be at once static, superseded, and the source of an ancient wisdom that, under the aegis of Hermeticism (Yates, 1964, pp. 44 and following), could still produce powerful technologies in the present day. At the same time, some of these scholars worked to discredit the originality of Egypt by alleging its wisdom had been stolen from the Jews, restoring an appropriately Christian genealogy for the Hermetic tradition (Rossi, 1987, pp. 121 and following). The retrojection of Mexico into the classical past is a theme shared by several of the chapters in this volume, especially the contributions of Botta, Marco Simón, and Olivier.

7. For this shift in focus, see Klor de Alva, 1980, p. 75.

8. The encounter is recorded in Dürer's diary for June 12, 1520, more than a year before the conquest of Mexico–Tenochtitlan by Cortés. On this incident, see Hess, 2004, and for a contextualization within the full range of European responses to New World art, see Lynch, 1967, p. 367. Meslay (2001) records an intriguing echo of Dürer's admiration in Murillo's use, two centuries later, of Mesoamerican obsidian mirrors as painting surfaces. Díaz del Castillo (1632/2005, chapter 38) compares Mexica pictorial traditions to contemporary and ancient European masterworks.

9. The Motolinía (1973) passage reads: "*Algunos espanoles . . . para hacer ver que tenian celo, pensando que hacian algo comenzaron a revolver la tierra y a desenterrar los defuntos, y poner premia a los indios que les diesen ídolos; y en algunas partes, ansí fueron apremiados y aflijidos, que buscaban todos los que estaban olvidados y podridos so tierra, y aquellos daban; y aún algunos indios fueron ansí atormentados, que en realidad de verdad hicieron ídolos de nuevo, y los dieron, porque los cesasen de aflijir*" (chapter 32). I base my interpretation of it on Marcocci, 2017, pp. 118–122. On the destruction of Mexica art objects through their conversion into bulk metal, see Colburn, 2005, p. 36. For spoliation as a mode of preserving indigenous religion, see Hamann, 2008, pp. 810–816; this author notes that, since *spolia* from preconquest temples were used to build churches, there was also a right or legitimate way to repurpose these artefacts.

10. The account given here derives in particular from Tertullian (Tert. *Apol.* 13) but see also Tert. *De idol.*, Cyprian *De idol. vanit.*, and August. *De civ. D.* 6: preface. For a summary of this theory of idolatry and its development in antiquity, see Ando, 2009, pp. 21–41. As Ando points out, it had roots in pre-Christian philosophy. Binder (2010), by contrast, highlights the importance of earlier Jewish thought in its development as

well. For the development of this theory in a New World context, see Gliozzi, 1987. As the latter author points out, the discourse of idolatry in the New World is far from an "innocent mistake"; rather, it is a strategy that serves the ends of the friars who apply it by giving them a discursive justification and program for the uprooting of indigenous cultural practices.

11. For the paradox at the center of this antimaterialist strand of idolatry critique, see Tert. *De idol*. 4.3. On the reuse and survival of image fragments in private residences, see Hamann, 2008, p. 809.

12. On the archaeological evidence for these practices, see López Lujan, 2014, pp. 276–283. Nichols (2013) situates Mexica antiquarianism within a longer tradition of Mesoamerican practices for legitimating new kingdoms via the relics of old ones. On *tōltēcāyōtl*, see León-Portilla, 1963/2012, p. 79.

13. As often in the *Florentine Codex*, the Nahuatl words mentioned above are not rendered in the Castilian column. My interpretation of the passage agrees with that of López Luján, 2014, p. 284.

14. For this argument, see Bassett, 2015, pp. 140–161. Compare Furst (1997, pp. 73 and following) and López Luján (2014, p. 276), who reach similar conclusions. On Xipe Totec and the associated ritual, see Clendinnen, 2010, pp. 26–40.

15. For the lexicographic data sited here, see the excellent tables at Bassett, 2015, pp. 206–208. On *teōcuitlatl*, see Klein, 1993, pp. 25–26. Klein highlights the transvaluation which gold (and excrement) underwent after the Spanish conquest.

16. On *tēixiptlahhuān*, see Bassett, 2015, pp. 6–11. The mask in figure 10.1 was likely manufactured far from Mexico–Tenochtitlan but bears comparison with masks that the Mexica would have collected as tribute. For its provenance, materials, and an interpretation that posits Tlaloc as an alternative to the usual identification with Tezcatlipoca, see Klein, 1986, pp. 137 and following.

17. For the nature of the *Florentine Codex*, see Robertson, 1965. On the importance of Pliny as a structural model, see Garibay K., 1954, Vol. 2, p. 71. On Sahagún's classicism in general, see Grafton, Shelford, & Siraisi, 1995, pp. 144 and following.

18. On Priscus and the *bulla aurea* [golden bull], see Plin. *NH* 33.4.10. On the rarity of gold in early Rome, see 33.5.14–6.17. On the first Roman gold coinage, see 33.13.47. Wallace-Hadrill (1990) gives an illuminating account of the *Natural History*'s status as an "unnatural history" that frequently entwines description of the natural world with a narrative about the use people make of it.

19. See Olivier, 2010, on the Greco-Roman molds into which Sahagún was trying to fit the Mexica pantheon. On the European tradition of mythographic manuals, see especially Seznec, 1995, pp. 250–256.

20. On Scaurus's columns, see Plin. *NH* 36.2.4–3.8. On Phidias's Venus and the beginning of sculpture, see 36.4.15, immediately preceded by an anecdote that bears

comparison to the Mexica beliefs, discussed above, about smoking stones. On Praxiteles's Ceres, see 36.4.23 and 36.4.18–22, for a sense of the moral valence of such an import. On Timotheus's Diana, see 36.4.33. For the imperial dimensions of Pliny's art history, see Carey, 2003, pp. 75–101.

21. Compare the extremely brief treatment of marble in Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 3, ff. 362v–363r. "Can be worked" is expressed by the Nahuatl word *mochīhuani*. On *metlatetl*, see Karttunen, 1992, s.v.

22. For an "unnatural history" of stones, see Vasari, 1550/1998. On sculpture as form imprisoned in rock and anticipating release by the sculptor, see the chapter on Michelangelo.

23. On *teōcuitlatl* as divine diarrhea, see Klein, 1993, p. 25, interpreting Sahagún, 1979, Vol. 3, ff. 364v–365r [11.8.9]. On the salience of form to Mexica ideas about precious metals, see Bassett, 2015, pp. 110–112.

24. On mirrors in Tezcatlipoca's ensemble, see Umberger, 2014. As Taube (1992, p, 174) suggests, they are likely also to have formed part of elite dress at Mexico-Tenochtitlan. On afternoon Sun as reflection in mirror, see Graulich et al., 1981, p. 45. On Mirrors in auguries, see Fernandez-Armesto, 1992, p. 290, which sounds an appropriate note of caution as to the *prophetia ex eventu* [the prophecy of the event] character of the auguries' supposed contents. On cosmological mirrors in Mexica thought, see Taube, 1992, pp. 183–192.

25. For the range of stones used in Mesoamerican mirrors that have survived to the present, see Lunazzi, 1996. Taube (1992, pp. 169–170) includes a still wider range of materials on the basis of fragments and corroded specimens.

26. Both Marcocci (2017, p. 122) and Hamann (2017, p. 67) have proposed on the basis of different evidence that indigenous resistance may have blocked the antiquarian gaze of European colonists.

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